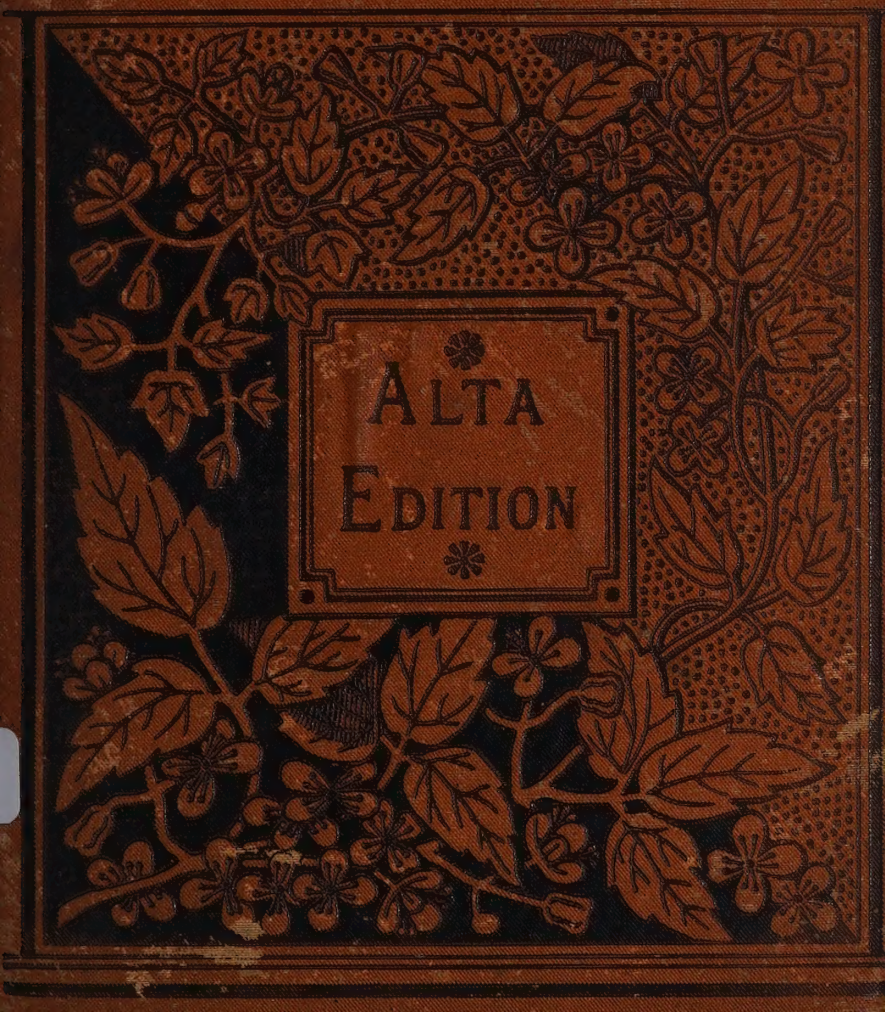
MARY AND FLORENCE



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"Now, Mary," said Mrs. Percy, "you may have your choice."

MARY AND FLORENCE;

OR,

GRAVE AND GAY.

BY

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Preface.

It has often been remarked with regret by the author of the following pages, that in books written for the purpose of conveying religious instruction to children, the scheme of Redemption, and the doctrine of the Atonement, subjects of all others the most important and deeply interesting, have been generally explained in language too vague and obscure to meet the comprehension of a child.

In the little story now offered to the children of several dear friends, a very feeble attempt has been made, when

touching on these most solemn points, to simplify to the youthful reader what has been so much more ably done by others, in works addressed to those of maturer years.

MARY AND FLORENCE.

Chapter First.

"Do you remember, Mary," said Florence Percy, as she stood with her sister looking out of one of the windows of a handsome house in Grosvenor Square, "do you remember, Mary, that when aunt told us papa and mamma would arrive in a month, we thought a month would never be over? and now it is over; and it seems quite short,—it seems shorter than a day."

"Than this day," said Mary; "for this has been a longer day than any other day; and nurse said it would be such a happy one, and that she would give us no work, and make it a holiday; but I think it is a longer day when we have no work."

"Yes," said Florence, "but it is because

we cannot read story-books. There is Lucy Fraser, whom aunt took us one day to see; she is just our age, just six years old, and she can read as well as a big lady, and she likes a holiday very much, and never says it is long. It is very cross of nurse only to teach us letters and syllables; what good does that do, if we cannot read stories?"

"No," said Mary, "it is not cross; for you know she says that mamma forbade her, and that mamma is to teach us to read words, and is to give us story-books herself. I wonder if she will teach us to read in that great book, which nurse reads every morning. Nurse says that book tells her everything she should do; and that we shall not be so often naughty when we can read that book."

"But," said Florence, "I do not know that I should like that, for I like to be naughty."

"Oh, sister!" exclaimed Mary, looking extremely shocked, "how can you say so? It is very bad of you."

"Yes," persisted Florence, "but I do like to be naughty; at least, I like it some-

times, for it is very *plaguy* to be always good. When nurse says to me, 'Now, do not shake the table, Miss Florence, for you will spill my tea,' then that is just why I like to shake the table; and when she says, 'Buttered toast is not good for little girls,' then I wish for it a great deal more; and always, when she turned about her head, I used to gobble up a little piece quite quick: but yesterday, you know, she caught me, and put me into the corner. Do you know, Mary, what I was wishing all the time I was in the corner? I was wishing I could grow a big woman in a moment, and then I could have reached up and given nurse a good slap. I do not like to be always little," continued Florence: "I do not see why I should be always little, and nurse always big; that is not fair."

"But," said Mary, "you know we are not to be always little: nurse says we shall grow big in time."

"Yes," answered Florence, "but I do not like to wait so long; I want to grow big quite quick. Mary, I am thinking of something:—you know nurse puts bear's-grease

on our hair, to make it grow quick; well, we can steal some when she is not looking, and rub it all over us when we go to bed, and then perhaps we shall be a great deal bigger in the morning."

"But," said Mary, "I should not like to steal it; nurse would be angry."

"But nurse," continued Florence, "is not to see us; and if nobody sees us we shall not be punished, you know."

"But still," said Mary, "I do not like to steal it: if nurse found it out she would shake her head, and look sorry; and I do not like to see her sorry. Oh, I wish mamma were come, and then perhaps she would tell us something which would do better than bear's-grease to make us big quite quick! Oh, how many things I wish to know about! But, sister, I am going to tell you one of the curious things I wish to know about. Do you know, that though I am so happy papa and mamma are coming, when I think of it a long time, something always comes into my throat, as if I were sorry. I wonder if mamma can tell us what makes us happy and sorry!"

"And I wonder," said Florence, "if she will come in the day-light. We shall not see her face so well, if she comes in the candle-light. And I wonder if I shall like her face. And I wonder if papa——"

"Florence," said Mrs. Douglas, looking up from the letter she was writing, "they say wonders will never cease, and I fear it is too true. Oh, you little chatterbox! is that little tongue of yours never tired of talking?"

"No, aunt, it is not the least bit tired; it is quite well and good. But oh, I wish, I wish I had a hundred tongues."

"Heaven forbid!" exclaimed Mrs. Douglas; "one such as you have, Florence, is quite enough for any one, and often rather too much for some people."

"Not for me, aunt," said Florence: "but I do wish I had two tongues, and that would be one to speak to mamma, and one to speak to papa, both at once: and I would ask mamma about India and the black people; and I would ask papa about the ship and the sailors. I think, aunt, it would be a better plan if we could speak with our ears, and hear with our tongues;

then, you know, we should have two tongues and one *hearer:* one *hearer* would do, aunt, would it not?" said Florence, holding her hand over one ear. "Oh, yes, it would, for I hear you laughing, aunt, quite well."

Mrs. Douglas laid aside her pen, infinitely amused with Florence's projected improvements.

"But," said Mary, thoughtfully, "what should we do about our *thinkers?* Would one thinker do for two tongues?"

"I do not know about that," said her sister, looking rather puzzled; "that is one of the things I want to know about. May be, two thinkers would make us feel too full. I should not like to be so full," said the little girl, looking quite oppressed by the multitude of ideas that were rushing upon her; "I should not like it at all; for sometimes I think my one thinker is too big, I want to know so many things at once. Aunt, do you think it would be a good plan to have two thinkers?"

"I have often told you, my love," said her aunt, "that I cannot answer such ques-

tions; you must ask your mamma when she comes."

"Oh, I wish she were come!" said Mary, "for you always say that; and when we ask nurse, she says so too. 'Miss Mary,' she says, 'you must ask your mamma.' I wonder if mamma will be a good *answerer;* and I wonder if she will tell us about *that* word. Florence, shall you be shy when mamma comes?"

"No," said her sister, "you know I never am shy."

"I wish I were never shy," said Mary: "and Lucy Fraser is not shy with her mamma; she kissed her very often that day. Well, I will try not to be shy. I will say quite to myself when I see her, 'Little girls should not be shy with mammas.'"

"*A carriage! a carriage!*" exclaimed Florence. "I see a carriage driving up to our door—and it is stopping—and there is a black man on the dickey, and a white maid, and an imperial, and trunks. It is papa and mamma! I see them! I see them!" Florence jumped about the room, clapping her hands. "Why do not you clap your hands too, Mary?"

But Mary stood for a moment quite still, trembling violently, her face and neck the colour of crimson; then creeping up to Mrs. Douglas, she looked up in her face and said, in a low, timid voice, "Aunt, do you think mamma will love me?"

"Indeed, Mary," said her aunt, "I do not think she will be able to help it."

But the question seemed the next moment more fully answered, when Mrs. Percy, with all a mother's fond affection, clasped the little girls to her bosom. "Oh, Heavenly Father," she murmured, "I thank Thee; Thou hast heard my prayer. My children! my dear children!" was all she could say, while tears of grateful joy bore testimony to her emotion.

Mr. Percy was little less agitated than his wife. He kissed them again and again, and pressed them to his heart; then, holding them from him a little way, he gazed upon their faces with fond delight. They were, indeed, all that a father's eye could love to dwell upon:—agitated on their parts, by feelings till then unknown, quiet tears were dropping from eyes of the clearest,

softest blue; their cheeks were glowing like the roses of summer, and a profusion of light glossy hair curled all over their heads, and fell in ringlets on their neck and shoulders.

How beautiful! Mr. Percy would have said, but he checked himself. "How like they are!" he exclaimed; "how exactly the same in every feature! I shall never know them! Which is Mary and which Florence?"

"I am Mary," said a soft sweet voice, which sounded like a silver bell; and to assist her papa's further recollections, she hid her face in her hands, and nestled into his bosom.

"And I am Florence, papa; you will know me by this coral bracelet. Aunt put it on to mark the difference."

"And is there no other difference, by which your papa will know you?" asked her aunt.

"Yes," said Florence, "he will know me because I am always in mischief, and Mary never."

"Not never," whispered Mary, "but only sometimes."

Mr. Percy smiled. "Such a meeting as this," he inwardly thought, "would have been cheaply purchased by the toil of a lifetime; and in two short years I have been enabled in affluence to rejoin these children; and such children! Oh, may God enable me to do my duty towards them, and to impart to them also of those treasures which fade not away."

If Mr. and Mrs. Percy were delighted with their children, the children, on their part, were no less delighted with their parents. Mrs. Percy was still a young woman: her residence in a warm climate had robbed her cheek of its bloom; but her features were beautiful, and her expression at once sweet and intelligent. Mr. Percy's appearance was also highly prepossessing; but he looked considerably older than he really was, from the circumstance of his hair having been shaved in a recent illness, and his then being obliged to wear a wig. A papa in a wig was certainly not what the little girls had expected, but still they were dutiful enough to forgive it; and half an hour had not elapsed before they were deeply attached to their

papa, wig and all. They were altogether a most happy group; and little Mary no longer thought the hours of that day the longest she had ever spent—evening came only too soon. At their accustomed hour of going to bed, nurse tapped at the door, and putting in her unwelcome head, said, "Miss Mary and Miss Florence, will you be pleased to come to bed?"

"No, no, nurse," said Florence, "we will not be pleased at all. I wish you would go away. Oh, mamma, do let us set up half an hour longer to-night!"

"No, my love," said Mrs. Percy, "not half an hour, for it is already late enough for little girls like you; but a few minutes more you shall remain: and, nurse, do you go to my room, and ask my maid for a small red leather trunk, which stood in the bottom of the carriage." The trunk was brought and placed on the table. Mrs. Percy took a small silver key out of her purse, and as little Mary was five minutes older than her sister, she was desired to open it;—she did so, and two large, beautiful dolls presented themselves to the delighted eyes of the children. "Now,

Mary," said Mrs. Percy, "you may have your choice."

Mary made choice of the one dressed as a little girl, and Florence had the other, dressed as a mamma. "I thought," said Mrs. Percy, "that you could not attend to two new mammas in one day, so I kept the dolls till you were about to leave me for the night. And now good night, my precious ones, and may God bless and preserve you."

The children looked at each other, but did not move; when Florence, apparently having summoned up courage, advanced to her mamma, and said in a whisper, scarcely audible, "Mamma, *who is God?*"

"You see, sister," observed Mrs. Douglas, "I have kept my promise."

"My dear Florence," said Mrs. Percy, "you have asked a question of all others the most deeply important; and at another time you shall be fully answered; and, oh, may you then learn to know God, and to love him beyond all earthly love! And now, dear children, go to bed; and once more, may God bless you."

"Sister," said Florence, as they went up

stairs, "I fear mamma will not be a good answerer either. We shall never understand *that* word."

"It is naughty of you to say so, Florence," observed Mary, "when mamma said she would tell us. Perhaps she will tell us to-morrow; so let us get to bed and sleep quick, that to-morrow may soon come."

In a few minutes they were in bed and clasped in each other's arms. Mary, faithful to her intention of sleeping quick, was already dropping off, when Florence whispered in her ear, "I like mamma's face very much: I liked it both in the day-light and in the candle-light. And I like papa's face too; and how funny he was, when he pulled his wig down to his nose, and then pushed it up over one eye! I should like to put on his wig. To-morrow I will go into his"——— But Florence suddenly dropped asleep, before her present plan for mischief was fully arranged.

Mrs. Percy was, meanwhile, talking to her sister of her children; and hearing from her that they were the most charming chil-

dren in the world ; perfect in their tempers, and without a single fault—at least she had never been able to discover one. Nurse, to be sure, was constantly making complaints of Mary's being rather obstinate, and Florence extremely passionate and disobedient; but that was always the way with nurses, they were constantly making complaints of something or other. In fact, Mrs. Douglas knew very little about the children, for she seldom saw them: she lived in a constant round of company, completely devoted to the world and to the world of London; for during the two years and a half that the children had been with her, she had never left town for more than a few days at a time, and on those occasions they were always left behind. Mrs Percy was fully aware of her sister's character; and as, in parting with her little girls she had the hope of being able to rejoin them in a year, she had expressly stipulated that no religious instruction whatever was to be given them, till she herself was enabled to do so; and that they were not to associate with any other children. Mrs. Percy had lost, some years before, in India, her eldest

daughter, a lovely and interesting girl, who had attained her twelfth year, and who never had been a day from under her mother's eye. The twins were not born till after her death; and the fear of injuring her Julia, by retaining her in that hot climate, made Mrs. Percy resolve to send home Mary and Florence, as soon as they were three years old.

Chapter Second.

When Mr. Percy entered the breakfast-parlour next morning, he found the little girls at play with their dolls, in a corner of the room. After kissing them repeatedly, and playing with them for some time, he sat down to read the newspapers, and told the children they might go and visit their mamma in her room. Mary ran off, but Florence did not immediately obey; she was at that moment engaged in a voyage of discovery, walking round and round her papa's chair, to try to discover how his wig was fastened on. When desired a second time, however, she did go, and found Mary waiting for her at her mamma's door.

They tapped; but as no one answered, they opened the door softly and went in.

Their mamma was not in the room: seeing the door of the dressing-room half open, they advanced towards it, and saw their mamma on her knees, with her hands clasped together—the lips moved as if she were addressing some one. The children remained motionless. Mrs. Percy arose. She appeared to have been weeping; tears still filled her eyes. She pressed them in her arms, but did not speak.

"Mamma," said Florence, "when we came in whom were you speaking to? There was no one to listen."

"Yes, Florence," said Mrs. Percy, "there was *God*."

"Oh, mamma!" exclaimed both the little girls at once, "do tell us now who is *God*."

"My dearest children," said Mrs. Percy, "I do not wish at present to talk to you on this sacred subject. To-morrow we are going down into the country; there you will see many new and wonderful things; but I shall not, even then, immediately answer your question: I wish you first to love God in his works, before I tell you who *God* is."

The children did not understand this.

They forbore further inquiry, but looked much disappointed; Florence in particular. For some time past, unknown to her little self, her glowing, ardent imagination had been wandering in a wide field of conjecture, vainly seeking that repose, that solution of every difficulty, which is to be found in God alone.

"And now, my dear children," said Mrs. Percy, giving a hand to each, "we shall go into the nursery; for I must speak to nurse about arranging your clothes to be packed up; and after breakfast your papa is going out, to buy each of you a small trunk to put them in. When we go down to the Priory each of you shall have a little bed with white dimity curtains, and each of you a wash-hand stand, and a chest of drawers to arrange your clothes in; and I hope you will very soon become tidy active little girls, and do a great deal to assist yourselves, and your mamma too."

Soon after breakfast the trunks were sent home—beautiful trunks they were, and the name of each little girl was marked on the top with bright brass nails, and there was

a wax cloth cover for each, to protect them from being spoiled by the rain.

Florence, delighted with the new idea of being tidy and active, was indeed a busy little woman that day; and the patience of poor nurse was severely tried. Every time she turned her back for fresh materials to fill the trunk, Florence was on the watch, either stuffing in something which was not to go, or unsettling again something which was; and there was no prospect of any termination to nurse's labours, till she remembered the dolls and the doll's trunks, and despatched Florence to prepare both for the journey of to-morrow.

Next morning Florence was at it again. When her papa entered the breakfast-parlour there she was, on her knees before a small packing-box, which she had trailed into the room from the lobby, where it had been placed the night before; and she was busily employed in filling it with all the books she had collected from her aunt's writing-table. She certainly was fitting them in very neatly, and was highly delighted with her own efforts.

"Look, papa!" she exclaimed, "how useful I have been. Mamma told me to be tidy and active. Have I been active, papa?"

"Too active, my little Florence," said Mr. Percy. "These are your aunt's books: they are not to go with us. And I am afraid she will not be pleased to see her splendid copies of Sir Walter Scott, and all her beautiful Annuals, stuffed into that dirty box. We must take them all out before she comes."

Poor Florence's mortification was great; but her spirits were again quickly raised, by seeing the travelling-carriage driven up to the door; and she was sent off to the nursery to get ready, while Mr. and Mrs. Percy sat down to breakfast. In a short time afterwards all was arranged for setting off; and when it came to the last moment, Mrs. Douglas was really sorry to part with the children. She liked the idea of their being in the house, and had always intended to begin to pay them more attention. She felt hurt when she saw them capering about the room, and wild with joy when the carriage was announced to be quite ready.

"So you are happy to leave me!" she

said, rather reproachfully, as she took them in her arms, and fondly embraced them.

"No, aunt," said Mary, (holding up her little mouth again to be kissed,) "we are not happy for that; but we are happy to be going into the country, for we are to see many wonderful things there; and to-morrow we shall come back and tell you about them."

Happy age when the pang of separation is unknown; when "the tear is forgot as soon as shed," and when "joy ever cometh in the morning!"

As they travelled slowly, it was almost the hour of sunset the following day before they came in sight of the Priory. It was situated at the foot of the Malvern Hills, surrounded by fine tall trees. When the little girls caught the first sight of those beautiful hills, their astonishment was unbounded. Little Mary was speechless with delight; but it was not Florence's way to be speechless on any occasion.

"Oh, papa!" she exclaimed, "look at these beautiful fields, reaching up to the very skies!"

"They are hills, not fields," said Mr. Percy.

"How big and how wonderful they are!" continued Florence. "What a number of gardeners it must have taken to build them up so high! and where could they get so much earth? Mary! look, look! I see little girls like us, riding on donkeys, and nurses holding them on. Mamma, may we do so too? May we ride on donkeys, on these beautiful hills?"

"Yes, my love," said Mrs. Percy; "by-and-bye, when we are a little more settled, you shall."

"Oh, not by-and-bye, mamma," continued Florence, "but to-morrrw. I wish so much that it may be to-morrow; and I want to ride up to the very top of that high hill, that I may"———

"May do what?" asked Mr. Percy.

"May look into the skies, papa. I want to know how the sun is fastened up. But how can it be fastened up," said the little girl, thoughtfully, "since it moves? It is sinking down now. Why does it not fall down altogether and burn us?"

They were at this moment entering the avenue—the house came in view, and Florence's ideas assumed a new direction. "Shall we sleep in our little white beds to-night, mamma?"

"Yes, my love."

"And see our wash-hand stands, and our chests of drawers?"

"Yes. I think I may promise that you shall," said Mrs. Percy; "for I wrote to Norris to have everything arranged for you."

"Oh, how happy I am!" said Florence. "I do not know what to do with my happiness."

"Yes," said Mary, "it is the second best happiest day in all our lives."

"And what was the first?" inquired Mr. Percy.

"The first happiest," said Mary, colouring all over, "was when the carriage stopped at our door, with a black man on the dickey, and we got a papa and mamma."

"Dear child!" said Mr. Percy, "your mamma and I may also say, that was 'the first, best, happiest day of our lives,' too."

On arriving at the Priory, they were wel-

comed by Mrs. Norris, the housekeeper, who stood on the steps of the hall door ready to receive them. She seemed delighted with the children, and most anxious that they should immediately partake of some refreshments she had provided for them; but there was no persuading the little girls to sit down to tea, till they had paid a most particular visit to the nursery, admired the little white beds, peeped into every drawer, and scampered over every other corner of the house.

After tea, their mamma being fatigued, Mr. Percy took them out for a little while into the garden; and here fresh wonder and fresh admiration were called for at every step. The borders were gay with flowers; beds of mignonette and stock-gilly-flower, filled the air with sweet perfume; carnations, roses, and lobellias bloomed in rich luxuriance. Red-streaked apples were bending down the boughs of the fruit-trees; bright yellow plums were peeping out among their green leaves on the wall.

"Oh, how beautiful all this is!" exclaimed both the children, with sparkling eyes, and

cheeks which glowed like the surrounding roses; "how much more beautiful than St. James's Park!"

"Papa," said Florence, "may we have one of those yellow plums?"

"No, my love, not now; you have just had tea; it is too late to have fruit now; besides, I do not think these plums are quite ripe. And remember, Florence," he continued, "that neither your sister nor you are to touch the fruit; your mamma or I will always give you what it is proper for you to have; and at present it will be better, I believe, that you do not go into the garden at all without nurse."

Florence looked disappointed.

"Yes," continued her papa, laying his hand fondly on her head, "yes, it had better be so now; but soon, I hope, my little girl will have a stronger guide than nurse."

"Who, papa?"

"*Conscience*, my love."

"Papa, I do not think that a pretty name at all for a servant."

"I would rather, Florence, that conscience were your master than your servant," an-

swered Mr. Percy, as he turned away to speak to the old gardener, who was working at a little distance.

"Mary," said the little girl, "I know whom papa calls conscience, it must be the man who is to teach us to read books. When Aunt Douglas took us to see Lucy Fraser that day, she told me it was a master who taught her to read books. I wish he may come to-morrow; I want to be able to read stories very much."

They heard their papa calling, and ran towards him.

"Children," he said, "I intend that each of you shall have a little garden to work in and take charge of: and here is good old Thomas, who has promised to assist you, at first, to put them in order. These two portions of ground, you see, are nicely raked and prepared; he tells me he meant to have planted a crop of peas in them, but I have chosen them for your little gardens. And now you shall assist me to mark an M for Mary, and an F for Florence, in each, to distinguish them."

Mr. Percy stooped down, and traced the

letters with his stick on the earth; he then took some very small seed from a paper the gardener held in his hand, and instructed the children how to sow it.

"Now," he said, "cover it over gently, in this way, with the earth."

Mary began to do so, but Florence exclaimed—

"Oh, papa, stop, stop! How are we to know the letters, now that you have quite spoiled them?"

"Florence," said Mr. Percy, "trust to me. In a couple of days, perhaps to-morrow, you will understand the reason of this. But there are many things you will be told both to do and to believe, which you will not understand the reason of; yet you must equally trust. This sort of trust is called *faith*. And now let us return into the house.

"Do you see those flowers?" continued Mr. Percy, pointing to a tuft of anemonies which were already closed. "Those flowers have shut themselves up for the night; they have gone to sleep, and so must my little girls."

Chapter Third.

Next morning, the children, as soon as they were dressed, ran off to bid their papa and mamma "good morning." Mr. and Mrs. Percy were not yet up; but they scrambled upon the bed, and kissed them, and began to talk to them; and Mary seemed to wish for no greater pleasure. But even having a papa and mamma to talk to could not long satisfy Florence's restless spirit; and sliding down softly from the bed, she was the next moment before the toilet-table, touching everything which came in her way. Her mamma's watch was presently in no small danger.

"Oh, leave my watch, Florence!" said Mrs. Percy; "you may let it fall, and break it."

Florence obeyed, though reluctantly; and the next moment she had all her mamma's rings stuffed upon her thumb.

"Florence," said Mrs. Percy again, "you are disarranging everything; you had better come away at once from my toilet-table."

And Florence, perceiving that this was by no means a favourable spot for prosecuting her further researches, and seeing that the curtains were drawn quite close on one side of the bed, glided off to that corner of the room where she could recommence, unseen, her small operations. Her mamma's scented soap was now the first object of attention. It looked so nice, and smelt so delightful, that thinking Indian soap might also be good to eat, she put it to her lips; but finding that, however beautiful, it still was soap, she contented herself with rubbing it all over her arms and neck. But at this moment, what did Florence see?—the object of many wishes, of various hopes and plans—she saw her papa's wig, and darted towards it.

"Florence," said Mr. Percy, a few minutes after, "what is all this little bustle I hear?

What are you about? Come here, my little girl."

Florence came sailing forward, the brown wig stuck upon the top of her head, her own flaxen ringlets coming out from below it, and her papa's coat hung round her shoulders. Little Mary almost fell from the bed with laughing, and Mr. and Mrs. Percy were extremely amused: indeed, Mr. Percy was very glad Florence had succeeded in her wishes. He was aware that from the first moment of his arrival, Florence had had some deep-laid plans with regard to his wig, and he hoped that now her mind would be more composed.

A few minutes after, the children were dismissed, and desired to go to nurse, who would take them out to walk. Nurse, however, was at that moment busy unpacking their clothes; but she allowed them to go down and play upon the lawn, till she could join them, charging them not to go out of sight of the windows. At first, they were very happy on the green grass, gathering daisies and buttercups, and delighted with a sense of freedom, and the luxury of

fresh air; but on seeing the gardener at a little distance, about to wheel some earth into the garden, their present pleasures and their late promises were alike forgotten, and they rushed in after him at the open door, and were in a moment scampering all over the garden. The next forbidden object of desire was the beautiful yellow plums upon the wall. The little girls stood before the tree admiring them, till they could no longer resist the temptation. Florence darted forward, and snatching the first which came in her way, began to eat it; it was, however, so sour that it drew her mouth together; and, quite disappointed, she threw it from her. The gardener at that moment came towards them.

"Oh, do give us a plum!" exclaimed Florence. "Do give one to Mary and one to me. You have a great many to spare."

"Willingly," said the good-natured old man. "It would be hard indeed, if I could nae spare ye a plum, in your own papa's garden." And as he spoke he gathered two of the finest, and gave them to the children.

"How good they are!" said Florence: "the one I took before was quite sour Thank you, sir, for making this so sweet."

"Dinna be *Sirring* the like o' me, my bonny young leddy," said the old man. "I am naething mair nor less than auld Thomas, the gardener. And as to the plums being sweet, you may thank the sun for that."

"The sun!" exclaimed both the children at once.

"Ay, the sun," continued the old man. "Is nae he the gardener's best friend? under reverence be it spoken to *Him* wha put him there. What wad we do without the blessed sun? Is nae it by his warmth that the seed fructifies in the ground, and the blossom bears fruit upon the bough; and all the earth is covered wi' joy and gladness? Oh, but it would be a cauld, stunted warld, without his warm beams. He is to the earth what our Maker is to our poor sinfu' souls—the light and the life thereof."

The children looked at the old man for a moment, and were silent; then Florence, pointing with her little finger to the skies, said, rather doubtingly, "And did you help

to put *him* there? How could you get up so high?"

"Me!" exclaimed the old man, recoiling back a few steps in horror. "Me put *him* there! Did ever mortal man hear the like o' that? May heaven preserve us all! Are they pagans a' thegither? And bonny blossoms too they are," he continued, his voice softening; "bonny blossoms that are here the day, and may be away to-morrow, and nae sense or knowledge hae they o' eternal things. Oh, that parents, in a Christian land, should gang striving and labouring wi' the musics and dancings, and all the sinfu' pomps and vanities that will be warse than nonsense in the kingdom o' heaven, and neglect to feed their poor babes wi' the pure milk o' the word, and all that pertains to their everlasting benefit. My bairns, gang hame," he said, in a soothing voice, "gang hame; and take your Bibles into your hands, and see what king Solomon says to the like o' you, poor silly moths, that are hovering about the candle. Hearken to the words of his wisdom, when he says, 12th chapter, 1st verse, 'Remember now thy Creator in

the days of thy youth, when the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them.' And oh, tell your parents," continued the old man, "to take tent to their ways, and to speak to you a word in season; for troth, if they winna, poor auld Thomas maun e'en try himsel."

The broad Scotch dialect of the old man, and the subject of it, were almost equally unintelligible to the children; but still they felt he was displeased with them for something, and they ran towards the house in rather subdued spirits. They met their pa- walking on the lawn, and to him they -peated, as well as they were able, what d passed. Mr. Percy understood it.

"My dear children," he said, "Tho as seems a worthy old man, and all he said to you was meant in kindness. He was shocked to find you ignorant of what alone can make you good and happy children, even in this world; but all shall soon now be explained to you, and I shall meanwhile let Thomas know what my motives have been for keeping you in ignorance. But from what you

have told me, I find you have not only gone into the garden without nurse, but have been eating the fruit. How is this?"

"Papa," said Florence, "when we ran into the garden, we forgot that you had forbidden us; and when I took the plum I thought"———

"Thought what?" asked Mr. Percy.

"I thought, papa, that as you did not see me, you would not know."

"My little girl has yet to learn," said Mr. Percy, "that there is an Almighty Being who sees her always; *One* who is greater than I. To-morrow, my dear children, your mamma means to talk to you on the subject; I shall not, therefore, say more to you at present. Now go in to breakfast; and afterwards your mamma and I intend to take you into the garden, to show you the bees at work. Many are the wonderful things you have to see."

After breakfast the little girls ran into their mamma's room, to entreat her to get ready. Mrs. Percy was trying on her bonnet. "What a good mamma you are!" said Mary; "just to be putting on your things

at the very moment we wished you to do it. And now we are all ready to go; and papa is waiting for us on the lawn."

But Florence did not seem quite in such a hurry. She stood gazing earnestly at a little book she had taken from the table. "Mamma," said she, looking up, "will Mr. Conscience come to-day?"

"Mr. Conscience! my dear child, what can you mean?"

"Yes, mamma. Papa said he would walk in the garden with us, instead of nurse; and I hope he will teach us too."

Mrs. Percy smiled. "My dear little girl," she said, "conscience is not a man, but a feeling. Conscience is that feeling within you, which makes you happy when you do right, and sorry when you do wrong. Do you understand me, my love?"

"Yes, mamma. I think I know quite well. My *thinker* tells me what to say, and my conscience tells me what to do. Is not that it, mamma? But what a number of urious thinks there are within me! and I annot find out who put them there. Do you know, mamma?"

Florence caught a glimpse of her papa at this moment, and flew off without waiting for an answer.

Their visit to the bees could not have been made at a more favourable moment. The sun was shining brightly; and as they stood before the hive, they heard a sweet hum from the little creatures, which were flying backwards and forwards, as the little girls thought, in no small confusion.

"They are not very busy bees at all," said Florence; "and nurse is always saying to us that we should be as busy as bees. I am sure we could do more good than that!"

"Have patience, my little girl. Do not decide so hastily;" and as he spoke, Mr. Percy advanced and took a straw cap off, which covered the top of the hive. The children then saw a box with a glass window. They looked through the glass—the bees were running backwards and forwards—they could not at first make out what they were about. Suddenly Florence exclaimed, "Oh, papa, how curious! I saw a bee go into the hive just now; he looked as if he could scarcely crawl—little balls of

something, like yellow powder, were sticking to his legs. Another bee came up, and helped him to take off these balls; and now they are working together. What are they doing, papa?"

"They are making the farina, or powder, which the bee carried off from the flowers, into what is called bee-bread, with which they feed the young bees. Formerly it was thought, that with this powder they made the wax with which their cells are formed; but it is now discovered, that the wax is made from an oily substance which they have about their own bodies. Look how beautifully and how exactly each cell is formed. When bees begin to make their cells, they divide themselves into bands: one set bring the materials for the work, and mould the wax with the help of their fore-feet, their tongues, and their little teeth; another, in the same way, make the arches, and smooth and polish the cells; while a third set fly off to the fields to suck the sweet flowers, and bring home honey, to refresh their companions after their labour: for the wax-workers, as they are called, never are

allowed to leave their work and fly abroad, lest, among so many bright flowers, they should be tempted to stay too long, and forget the work they have to do at home. But to make up for this disappointment, those bees that have gone to the fields for honey, when they return, place themselves behind the wax-workers, and there they wait patiently, like little servants, till their companions wish to be fed. So, when Mr. Wax-worker is fatigued with his labour, and wishes some refreshment, he puts down his trunk, which is as much as to say, 'Be so good as to give me my dinner, sir.' Then his attentive little servant opens his honey-bag, and feeds him: and when he has dined heartily, he goes back to his work, quite pleased and refreshed."

"And where does the bee keep his honey-bag, papa?"

"He keeps it, my love, in his stomach. The bee pushes his trunk into the flowers, and sucks the honey from them; then he swallows the honey, and it goes into a little bag in his stomach. But the bee has the power of opening this bag and forcing up

the honey again, to feed the other bees, and so fill the cells, that they may have food also in the winter, when they can no longer gather honey from the flowers."

"Oh, papa!" said Mary, "how I wish bees could speak, that they might tell us how they know to do all this!"

"They cannot speak, my love; yet they can make themselves understood by each other."

"How do you know this, papa?"

"I will show you, my love." Mr. Percy stooped down, and lifted a dead bee from the ground: he put this dead bee on the wooden board on which the hive was placed. A bee came out of the hive, and was just about to take wing and fly away, when it perceived its dead companion: it suddenly stopped, and advanced to the dead bee, looked at it attentively for a moment, then tried to move it—it could not, it was too heavy; and the other returned again into the hive. "He has gone," said Mr. Percy, "to ask his companions to assist him. He will make them some signs that they will understand." In a few minutes they saw the bee return, with

two others; then, all three taking hold of the dead bee, they dragged it to the edge of the board, and giving it a push, it fell to the ground.

Florence clapped her hands. "How clever, and how very curious! Oh, papa! do make a clever bee for me!"

"What do you mean, my love?"

"I mean, papa, a bee that can run, and fly, and make honey like those bees. I bought a bee in the toy-shop the other day, and the man said it had six legs and two wings, and was as good as any bee in the garden; but it does not run, or fly, or make honey. It is not a clever bee. I put it into a box, and gave it some sugar, but it would not eat; and when I opened the box next morning very softly, lest it should fly away, it did not move. Will you teach it to fly, papa?"

"My love, I cannot: but to-morrow you shall know who gave the bee the power to fly, and who made those trees and flowers, and all you see in this beautiful world. And now let us leave the garden. Another day I shall tell you about the queen bee, which is quite as curious and wonderful as what

I have told you now. Meanwhile, let us get in the wood, for neither your mamma nor I can stand this sunshine so well as those little creatures do: and Mary and you may run about in the wood, and play at busy little bees. Suppose you were to make a little honey for our breakfast to-morrow, now that you have seen how it is done. Your mamma will give you a pretty little china plate to put it on; and I promise that we shall eat all you make, and be so much obliged to you for it."

"Oh, papa!" said Florence, "you are joking; you know we cannot."

"Then you must not say again, my little girl, that you can work better than the bees.'

Chapter Fourth.

As soon as breakfast was over next morning, Mrs. Percy took the little girls into her room. She seated herself at the open window, which commanded a view of the hills, on which the sun at that moment was sweetly shining; and calling the children towards her, she made room for them both to sit beside her on the same chair.

"How I wish there was room for my doll too!" said Florence, looking towards the corner where she had left it, when her mamma called to her.

"Well, my love," said Mrs. Percy, "tell your doll to walk across the room, and bring that footstool to sit by us."

"Mamma, you are in joke; the doll can not walk, or lift a stool."

"Cannot you make it walk, Florence, and bring the stool? It has legs and arms as you have."

"No, mamma, I cannot; I am but a little child."

"I am not a little child, Florence," said Mrs. Percy; "I am a tall and big woman, yet I could not make the doll walk; I could not make the bee fly; I could not give to you one hour of sunshine. But, my dear children, there is a great and glorious Being, who made all things—that Being is God. He made that bright and beautiful sun, which gives light and heat to all around. He made you and me, and all that is in the world:—the birds which fly through the air, the bees which hum among the flowers, the caterpillers which crawl upon the ground—all are the works of God. He gives you the air you breathe, the food you eat; he sends quiet sleep to refresh you by night, and kind friends to watch over you by day; and all he asks in return is, that you will love him and obey him."

"Oh, mamma!" said Mary, "I do love this good God; and I wish to see him."

"My dear child, you cannot see God. No one, while in this world, can see God as he is. But, though we do not see him, he sees us: 'He sees and knows all things, and he can do all things.'"

"Mamma," said Mary, "does God see us at this moment? and does he know what you are saying to us?"

"Yes, my love; he sees us at this moment, and every moment of the day and night: he is for ever watching over us. When you are good and obedient children he loves you, and smiles upon you; when you are disobedient, he is angry."

"And where is God now, mamma?"

"He is in HEAVEN, my love, beyond those skies. Heaven is called God's kingdom. Holy angels are round his throne—bright and beautiful spirits, with shining wings: they have no wickedness in them; they love God, and obey him, and sing his praise; they are for ever happy in heaven. There is no sin nor sorrow there. The fields, we are told, are for ever green; the flowers are always blooming. There all is peace, and joy, and

happiness; and it is a happiness which is for ever and for ever."

The children were silent for a moment. Little Mary then said,—

"Mamma, shall we go to this beautiful heaven, and be like those happy angels?"

"Yes, my love: if, while we are in this world, we love God and obey him, you and I, and all of us, shall go to heaven when we die, and be like those angels."

Mary looked earnestly at her mamma, but she did not speak: she then hid her face in her bosom.

"What is it my sweet child wishes to ask?" said Mrs. Percy; and she stooped down, and kissed her cheek.

Mary raised her head.

"Mamma, I am afraid to make you sorry; but nurse told us we had a sister Julia, who is dead—is she now a beautiful angel?"

"Yes, my sweet love; your dear sister is now an angel in heaven. Even when she was a little child, as you are now, her delight was to please God and to pray to him; and she was taken from happiness here, to

still greater happiness above. My most earnest prayer is, that my dear children should resemble her. Be as sweet, as humble, as affectionate as she was, and you will make my happiness now, and add to it here after."

"But, mamma," said Florence, "why do you pray to God? What is praying?"

"My love, it is begging God to forgive you when you have done wrong; it is asking him for what you want, and thanking him for what you receive."

"But, mamma, God is in heaven, and can he hear us who are on earth?"

"Yes, my love; we cannot utter a single word that God does not hear. He hears me now, while I am talking to you; and it is God who puts every good thought into our hearts. We cannot think what is good without the help of God."

"But, mamma, if God put only good thoughts into our hearts, how is it we are ever bad?"

"Because, my dear children, there is also a wicked spirit, who has some power over us. This wicked spirit is the devil. He was

once a good angel, but he became disobedient, and God thrust him out of heaven, and threw him into a frightful place, called hell, full of wickedness, and misery, and everlasting burnings. It is there wicked people go to who do not love God. When they die, they are put down to hell, and are for ever miserable. This wicked spirit is always trying to make others as wicked as himself; and it is he who puts bad thoughts into our hearts. When you are angry with each other, when you are disobedient, or say what is not true, it is the devil who is putting this evil into your hearts: but if you pray to God, he will protect you from his power, and forgive you."

"But, mamma," said Mary, "some little children do not go to heaven when they die. Once we saw a funeral; and two little girls, just our size, walked after the coffin, and they were sorry, and crying very much; and it made me sorry too. And nurse told us they were sorry because their little brother was going to be put into the ground in the church-yard. Was he bad, mamma?"

"I hope not, my love; I hope he was good, and that the soul of the little boy was at that moment happy in heaven. It is only the body which dies, and is put into the ground; the soul lives for ever."

"The soul, mamma! What is that? I do not understand."

"Mary," said Mrs. Percy, "you told me just now, you were sorry when you saw the little girls weeping. What was sorry? Was it your arm?"

"No, mamma."

"Was it your ear?"

"No, mamma; it was my *within*."*

"That *within*, Mary, is your soul. And your answer recalls to my remembrance one of the questions in a catechism of Dr. Watts, which my mamma taught me when I was a little girl like you. To the question, 'How do you know that you have a soul?' the answer was, 'Because I find something within me which can think and know, can wish and desire, can rejoice and be sorry; which my body cannot do.' What you have been accustomed, my dear little girl, to call your

* A real answer.

thinker, is a part of your soul: your conscience, your memory, your judgment—all are feelings of the soul. But come, my dear children, let us go into the garden; I have told you quite enough for the present; and now I wish you to run about and amuse yourselves."

I dare say, my young readers, you can guess to what spot of the garden Mary and Florence first directed their steps. And what was their delight and astonishment, when they saw a bright green F and M distinctly visible, where their papa, two days before, had sown the little seeds.

"Oh, how wonderful! how delightful!" they both exclaimed, clapping their hands.

"I shall always trust to papa," continued Florence, "even though I do not understand. Mamma, did you expect this?"

"Yes, my love," said Mr. Percy, "I did. The sun has been very warm both yesterday and to-day, and I thought it probable the seeds would be above ground."

"How very useful the sun is!" said Mary. "How good it is in God to put it there!"

Old Thomas was passing at that moment; he stopped and looked kindly at the little girl.

"That's right, my bonny young leddy, weel do I like to hear you giein' honour to whom honour is due And sae kind and condescending o' my honoured master, to be giein' me a reason wherefore the word o' life has been sae lang keepit frae ye. But oh, my bonny bairns!" continued the old man, "now that the precious seed has been sown in your hearts, may it spring up and bear fruit a hundred fold; may it be watered wi' the dew o' your Heavenly Father's love; may it be warmed wi' the sun o' his righteousness; may you grow in grace, as you grow in stature; and, precious as you are in the sight o' an earthly parent, may you be as shining jewels in your Redeemer's crown!"

The old man placed his hands on their little heads, and passed on.

"He is a kind old man," said Mary: "he loves us now, because we know God."

"My dear child," said Mrs. Percy, stooping down and kissing her cheek, "may you

go on to know him more and more; for it is a knowledge, my Mary, above all price. And now," continued Mrs. Percy, "as I wish this to be a day greatly remembered by you, I wish it in every respect to be a happy one. You may, therefore, choose where we are to go next."

"Oh, then," exclaimed both the little girls at once, "let us go to the hill, mamma!"

"Well, dear children, be it so," said Mrs. Percy. "We shall now go and invite your papa to accompany us. And as we pass through the village, if we see any donkeys disengaged, you shall each have one to ride up the hill, while your papa and I walk by your side."

"Thank you, thank you, dear mamma!" said both the little girls, as they bounded off, wild with joy. In a few minutes they ran back, exclaiming—

"What do you think, mamma, we have seen?—a dead fish lying by the side of the pond."

"Mamma, is that fish's soul in heaven?" asked Florence.

"My love," answered Mrs. Percy, "a fish nas no soul; neither have birds, nor any animals; it is only men and women who have souls."

"And little children," added Florence.

"Yes, my love, and little children."

"But, mamma," said Florence, "if a lion were to eat up a man, could God take his soul out of the lion?"*

"My dear child," said Mrs. Percy, "the soul cannot be destroyed. The soul once created, lives for ever: for ever happy, or for ever miserable. Precious, inconceivably precious, in the sight of God, are the souls of his people. But it is not at this moment that I can explain to you all that has been done to save our souls from death."

Florence thought for some moments, and then said,—

"Mamma, it is very wonderful about the soul; I wish I could understand it better. But how are you quite sure it is there, if it is never seen? Have you never seen it going in, or coming out?"

"No, my love; the soul is a spirit, it has

* An original question of a child.

no visible shape: but we know that other things exist, as well as the soul, though we have never seen them. What is it that is blowing in your face at this moment, Florence?"

"It is the wind, mamma."

"Yet you do not see it," continued Mrs. Percy, "or know whence it comes. There is a verse in the Bible, Florence, in God's own book, which says, 'The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth; so is every one that is born of the Spirit.'"

"Mamma," said Mary, "I think the Bible was the name of that large book which nurse used to read every morning. She said we should not be so often naughty when we could read in that book."

Florence coloured; and, looking towards her sister, said, in a low voice,—

"I do not wish to be naughty now. When I said that bad thing, I did not know that God heard me, and would not love me. Mamma," she continued, "why do you call the Bible God's own book?"

"Because, my love, God put into the hearts of good men what they were to write in it. It is in that book that we are told all that we are to do, and all we are not to do. The Bible is, therefore, called the Word of God. To-day, my dear children, I mean to begin to read it to you; and I shall teach you to say a few verses of it by heart every day. Very soon I hope you will be able to read it yourselves."

At this moment they saw Mr. Percy coming towards them. He highly approved of the intended visit to the hill; and they all proceeded together to the village of Great Malvern.

Who has ever seen this beautiful village, with its old abbey and its picturesque church, without admiration? But Mary and Florence had none to spare. Even Gothic architecture had at that moment no charms for them. They were in eager pursuit of donkeys; and their quick little eyes soon discovered two meek-looking creatures, hanging their heads, and patiently standing by the side of an old wall. They had saddle-cloths of fair white linen, trimmed with scarlet

ribbon; yet they seemed in no wise puffed up either with vanity or any other kind of food. And Anna Rowly came forward to offer her services—a pretty little modest girl, well known in the village of Malvern.

"And this boy, miss," she said, dropping a curtsey, and pointing to a little lad who stood at a short distance, "belongs to me, and he will lead the other donkey quite safely."

The little girls did not pause to examine the relationship between them. Mr. Percy lifted them both up on the back of the donkeys, and the whole party proceeded; and never did a happier party set out on that pleasant journey. The children's spirits rose at every step: they sung, and laughed, and chatted with Anna; and even when she spoke of a poor mother at home, sick and suffering, it was all they could do to be sorry. On reaching the summit of the hill they dismounted; and while their attendants led the donkeys to a short distance to graze, the whole party seated themselves upon the grass.

The rich vale of Worcester lay at their

feet, with its pretty villages and verdant fields; and, as far as the eye could reach, fresh beauty burst upon the sight. The children gazed in silent admiration, actuated by feelings indescribable, and till then unknown. The fair volume of nature no longer presented to them an unmeaning page; and from nature's works, they lifted their little hearts, in grateful adoration, to nature's God.

For some moments no one spoke. Mary then, almost in a whisper, said, "And God made all this beautiful world, and this bright sun, and my papa and mamma, and you too, Florence. How good God must be! I wish we had something to give to God for being so very kind to us."

"My dear child," said Mrs. Percy, "God has asked you, in the Bible, to give him your heart. The meaning of that is, that you should love him, and obey him, and be constantly thinking how to please him. When you walk in the garden, or in the fields, and the wind gently blows over the opening flowers, and the air is filled with their sweet perfume, then you should thank God

in your heart, for having made this world so full of beauty; and when you hear the little birds singing in the branches, you should think they are singing a song of praise to God; and you too should praise him. And you should be grateful to him, and thank him in your heart, for the health you enjoy, and the food you eat, and the quiet, sweet sleep he sends, to refresh you when you are weary. You think this world very beautiful, my little Mary; but there was a time when it was still more beautiful; a time when no labour of man was required to make the flowers to bloom, or the fruit-trees to yield their fruit. But in that happy time *sin* had not entered into the world."

"And when did sin enter?" said Mary.

"My love," said Mrs. Percy, "your papa has brought a Bible with him, that he might here, in this favourable moment, while the glorious sun is shining in the heavens, and the earth lies before us, covered with the beautiful works of God, read to you the account of the creation of the world and the fall of man."

Mr. Percy then, taking the book from his

pocket, read to them the three first chapters of Genesis. With the account of the creation, and the description of the garden of Eden, they were deeply interested; but both were indignant at Eve's transgression, Florence particularly. "How wicked," she said, "and how greedy! I never would have done that. I would have"——

Mary whispered something in her ear. Florence stopped and coloured.

"What is the matter, my love?" said Mrs. Percy.

"Mamma," continued Florence, her colour deepening as she spoke, "Mary is putting me in mind of how I took the plum, though papa forbade me; but I did not know then that God saw me, and would be displeased. And I did not know that it was the wicked spirit who was tempting me. But if the wicked spirit is allowed to tempt me, mamma, how can I help being naughty?"

"You cannot help it yourself, Florence; of yourself you can do nothing; but God will put his own Spirit into your heart, to teach you what is right, if you ask him for it We are told in the Bible, that we

shall never be tempted above what we are able to bear; but that 'God will, with the temptation, make a way for us to escape.' You have just heard from the Bible, that when God had made everything in the world, he looked upon it, and behold it was very good; and that when he made Adam and Eve he made them in his own image, and they were perfectly pure and holy—they had no angry passions in their hearts to make them unhappy; and they lived in that beautiful garden, where everything was smiling around them. Sin and sorrow never entered there, and sickness and death were unknown. But when Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit, then all those evils came into the world, and their hearts became filled with many sinful feelings; and the punishment their sins deserved, for their having disobeyed the commands of God, was dreadful indeed, for it was the punishment of eternal death; which means the destruction of the body, and the everlasting misery of the soul. And we, their children, partake of the same evil nature: our hearts are now filled with the same angry passions, and the same

dreadful sentence of eternal death, would also have been our portion, had not One, who was himself perfectly pure and holy, offered to suffer for us the punishment our sins had deserved. But, my dear children, this is a very difficult subject for you to understand; and I am afraid of stretching your little minds too much at once. At another time I shall endeavour to make it more plain to you: meanwhile, go and run about a little and amuse yourselves: or, stop for a moment; let us see, first, what our good Norris has provided for two little girls, who, I doubt not, are more than usually hungry, from the mountain air." And Mrs. Percy, as she spoke, opened a little basket, which was hanging over her arm, and gave Mary and Florence each a couple of biscuits and several of the bright yellow plums which Florence had before tasted. The little girls seated themselves on the grass, and making one of the biscuits serve as a plate for their fruit, they took out of their pockets the little silver knives their Aunt Douglas had given them, and having cut up a plum, and carefully taken out the stone, they each presented one to their papa and mamma

"Do take it all, dear mamma," said Mary, "for we like to have something to give you, you are so very kind to us."

"Indeed we do," said Florence, "we like it very much. And, papa, you must not leave one morsel of my plum. Do not be afraid of the stone, for I have taken it out." And, as she spoke, she scrambled up on her papa's knee, and stuffed the whole plum into his mouth at once.

"Oh, Florence! Florence!" said Mr. Percy, as soon as he could speak, "you will kill me with your kindness."

"Oh, no, papa! there is no fear of that. And I should like to do a great deal more kindness to you, if I could; for I do not know what to do to be kind to you. And I am so happy! and I like mamma, and you, and Mary so much, that I could jump up to the skies with joy. But I should not like to stay there: I should just like to jump down again; for I think this world very beautiful, and I like all the people in it very much. And do not look so sorry, papa, for my saying that, for I will try to love God very much; and I do love him, now that I know that he

gives us so many good things, and keeps mamma and you alive to take care of us, and be kind to us. Mamma, will you tell me what I should say to God for being so kind to us? Do you think he would like me to thank him?"

"Yes, my love," said Mrs. Percy, "God loves a grateful heart; and even the prayers of little children, if they love him in their hearts while they pray, are pleasing in his ears. To-morrow I shall teach you a little prayer, which you shall say to God morning and evening. And now run about and amuse yourselves. Mary, why do you not eat that last plum? Do you not like it?"

"Yes, mamma, I do like it," said Mary; "but I am keeping it for Anna Rowly. I dare say she likes plums too. And may be, Florence will give hers to the little boy, for they were both very kind to us, when we were coming up the hill. Will you, Florence?"

"No, Mary," said Florence, "I cannot do that, for you see I have begun to eat my plum. Yes, I assure you I have. You can scarcely see it; but I took a little bit out here."

"Yes, I do see it," said Mary; "but it is such a little bit, that Anna's boy would not care: he would still have a good big plum."

"But mamma gave me the plum for myself," continued Florence; "and it is very hard, Mary, that you will not let me eat it, if I choose;" and with a rising colour, and a look of great impatience, she was about to put the plum again to her lips, when she caught Mrs. Percy's eye anxiously fixed upon her. She stopped instantly, and hiding her face in her mother's lap, she exclaimed, in a voice almost choked with her tears, "Oh, mamma! I know what you are thinking; you are thinking I am like Eve. I said I should not have been wicked and greedy, like Eve, if I had known about God; and now, though I do know about him, I have been bad again. Mamma, will you ask God to forgive me, and I will run away this very moment, and give the little boy my plum? And I will hold it far away from my mouth, that I may not be tempted." And, as she spoke, stretching out her arm, and holding the plum as far as possible from her, she darted off, followed by her sister.

Both Anna Rowly and her companion were very glad to be taken notice of, and very grateful; and Florence forgot all her sorrows, when she saw how much the little boy enjoyed his plum, and did not seem at all aware of the danger it had escaped. They asked Anna a great deal about her mother; and they were much interested in what she told them, though they did not quite understand it all.

Anna said her mother was very sick, and suffered a great deal of pain; and in the morning, before she went out with the donkeys, she always read to her out of the Bible; and when she went home at night she read to her again. "And my mother," continued Anna, "says these are her happiest times. And when I read to her about our Saviour's sufferings, she says it makes her feel more patient; for what are her pains, compared with what he suffered for us?"

"Mamma," said Florence, as they returned to where Mr. and Mrs. Percy were sitting, "Anna told us something we did not understand. She told us she read to her mother about our Saviour s sufferings. Who is our

Saviour? Is it about that, that you said you would tell us more, mamma?"

"Yes, my love, it is," said Mrs. Percy. "But before I begin on this subject, I will tell you a little story that will, perhaps, make it clearer to you; and ask you a few questions. Tell me then, first, do you think it is right for a father to punish his children when they do wrong?"

"Yes, mamma, it is," said Florence.

"You are quite right to say so, my dear child; for if sin were not to be punished, children would go on doing more and more wrong every day, till the whole world would be filled with wicked people. Well, then, if I put two plums on my table, and say, 'Mary and Florence, you are not to eat these plums;' and if, the moment I went out of my room, you were to eat them, then it would be my duty to punish you both. But if Mary were to say, 'Do not punish Florence, I am willing to suffer all the punishment myself;' I would then answer, 'Mary, I cannot do that. If you had not eaten the plum I might have punished you instead of Florence, if you had been willing

to bear it for her sake. But if both are guilty, then both must suffer. You have your own punishment to bear, therefore you cannot bear Florence's too.' I know this is difficult for you to understand. Now listen to the story.

"There was a father who had several children, of whom he was very fond; and his greatest delight was to make them happy, and to do them good. Everything that could hurt them, or make them sorry, he kept away from them; and everything their hearts could wish for he gave them; and all he asked of them was, that they should obey him and love him. Now these children lived in a beautiful garden: it was full of bright flowers; no weeds came up to choke these flowers; they were always smelling sweetly, and never faded away; and the trees were loaded with every kind of fruit; and it was always summer there, and the fruit was always ripe; and while the children seated themselves under the trees, and refreshed themselves with the sweet fruit, many little birds, with shining wings, sung to them in the branches; and they were the happiest children in the world. Now this good father thought,

If I have given those children all that is in this pleasant garden, and have not forbidden them to touch any one thing which grows here, how can I know that they love me, and would obey me, where I to keep anything from them? I will give them a trial. I will make for them a law, which they are not to break; and then I shall know if they really love me, and will always obey me. So the father said, 'Children, you may eat of the fruit of every tree in the garden, except one: on that tree which I have planted in the middle of the garden, the fruit is bitter; if you eat of that tree it will make you sick and sorrowful: and if you do not obey me in this, which is a very small thing, you will not obey me in a greater; therefore I shall know that you are disobedient children, and your punishment shall be very great. You shall never go to that beautiful house which I have prepared for those children that love me; but you shall die here, and go down to the dust, and be no more seen.'"

"Mamma," said Florence, "do stop one moment! do tell me, is not this like the story of the garden of Eden you are telling us?"

'Yes, my love, it is," said Mrs. Percy; "and now listen to what follows. After their father had left them, those children said to each other, 'Why should we wish to have the fruit of this tree, when we have so many others to choose from? We do not wish to eat of this tree in the middle of the garden, but surely we may walk round it, and admire its beauty!' And they looked upon it, and went nearer and nearer; and it was very beautiful, and the smell of the fruit was sweet; and they said, 'Surely our father has deceived us; surely this fruit is not bitter! Come, let us taste it, that we may know.' And one took of the fruit, and gave to the others, and they all ate of it; and presently the happiness they had enjoyed but the moment before fled away, and they became miserable children. And when they heard their father's voice, calling to them in the garden, they ran away, and tried to hide themselves; but they could not hide themselves from their father's eye; and he called to them to come forward, and they stood before him and trembled exceedingly. And he said, 'You are wicked and ungrateful

children; you have disobeyed my commands. Now I know that you do not love me, and you must all suffer the just punishment of your fault.' Then they fell on their knees and wept, and were very sorrowful. And the father said, 'Is there any one of you who is innocent, and who would bear the punishment, that the others might go free?' But there was no one found; for all had sinned, and had broken their father's commands.

"Now this good father had a son, his well-beloved. And this son dwelt in the brightness of his father's house: he was not in the garden, but lived always with his father, and was perfectly pure and holy; and he said, 'Oh, my father! spare the lives of these poor miserable children! And though they must no longer live in this pleasant garden, give them time for repentance. And I am willing to leave you, my father, and all the beauty of your house, and come and be with these poor children, to teach them what is good: and after I have been with them for a time, then I am willing to suffer death for them, if you will forgive them all their sin, and allow them to go free.' And the father

listened to the voice of his son, and he forgave the children for his sake: and the son suffered all the punishment their sins had deserved."

"Oh, mamma!" exclaimed both the little girls, "what an interesting story! and what a good son! How the children must have loved him!"

"But, mamma," continued Florence, "I do not think any one could have been so very good as that."

"Yes, my dear child. Jesus Christ, who is the Son of God, and equal with God, did all this for us. He offered himself to be punished for our sins;—he gave his body to suffer a cruel death, that our souls might live for ever; he left the glory of his Father's kingdom, to come down upon earth, and to dwell with sinners; he shared all our sorrows and our sufferings, that he might teach us, by his example, how to please an all-perfect God; he went about doing good continually, healing the sick, opening the eyes of the blind, and comforting all that mourned: he was meek and lowly of heart, and he loved all mankind as brothers. We

read in the Bible, that he took little children in his arms, and blessed them, and said, 'Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven.' But he did more for us than all I have yet told you. Jesus Christ is called our Saviour, because he saved us from the punishment of eternal death, which our sins had deserved. He had no sin himself to be punished for; therefore he took our sins upon himself, and suffered the punishment of a cruel death, that God might forgive us, and save our souls for his sake. But our bodies must still bear the punishment of Adam's transgression. All the pain, and sickness, and death, which are in the world, are the punishment of Adam's sin:—our bodies still must die. But if we pray to God to send his Holy Spirit into our hearts, to teach us what is good, and are sorry when we displease him, and repent of our sins, then he will forgive us for our Saviour Jesus Christ's sake; and when we die, he will take our souls, which Christ has redeemed, to heaven, to dwell there in happiness for ever; but if we go on doing wrong, and do not pray to God for his

assistance, and do not believe that Jesus Christ came down from heaven to die for us, then our Saviour's death will be of no use to us; and our souls will not go to heaven, but will be for ever miserable, after our bodies are dead."

"How dreadful that would be!" said Mary. "But, mamma, we do believe that Jesus Christ came down from heaven to die for us; for we know you never tell us what is not true. But how do you know this your self? Did your mamma tell it you?"

"Yes, my love; my mamma told it me just as I have been telling it to you. And then she read to me in the Bible the account of the birth, and life, and death of our Saviour Jesus Christ; which is written by good men, who loved him, and who followed him when he was in this world, and heard all that he said, and saw the miracles which he did;—how he opened the eyes of those that were blind, and made them to see; and how he made lame men to walk, and leap for joy. Children, too, seem always to have been his peculiar care. There is a beautiful account in the Bible of a little girl, of twelve years

old, whom he raised from the dead, and restored to her sorrowing parents. All these interesting accounts I shall read to you by degrees, and endeavour to make you fully acquainted with our Saviour's history."

"How I wish Jesus Christ was in the world now," said Mary; "I would love him very much!"

"And so would I," said Florence; "and perhaps he would take us in his arms and bless us. Where is Jesus Christ now, mamma?"

"He is in heaven, my love. Jesus Christ, we read in the Bible, rose from the dead on the third day. His body did not see corruption; it did not turn to dust again, as our bodies do: but after he rose again from the dead, he showed himself to many people who loved him; and he promised to send the Holy Spirit into their hearts, to comfort them when he went away: and he was taken out of their sight, and ascended up to heaven; and at the end of the world he will come again, to judge all mankind: then, those who have believed in him, and have tried to please God, shall dwell with him

for ever, in happiness and glory; and those who have been wicked shall dwell with the evil spirit, and be for ever miserable. Now, my dear children, we must begin our journey home again, for it is getting late."

The children were again quickly reseated on their donkeys, and the party proceeded homewards. "Take care, little girls," said Mr. Percy; "remember, you have not such a secure seat as when you were ascending the hill. Look what you are about, Florence; you will slide over your donkey's nose, if you do not take more care. You had better allow your little attendants to hold you on when it becomes very steep."

"Oh, no, papa," said Florence, "I shall not fall off; there is not the least fear, and I am not at all frightened. I saw a little girl going down the hill, just as little as I am, and nobody was holding her on, and she did not fall; and why should I fall, papa?"

"Because, my love, you have not been accustomed to ride on a donkey, and perhaps that little girl has. However, Florence, take your own way in this matter; only remember, I have warned you of what is likely to happen."

"And so you are frightened, Mary," said Florence, a few minutes after, (turning to her sister,) "and have got Anna to hold you on. Well, that is curious, for I am not in the least frightened. You see I can ride quite well, without any one holding me on. Look at me, Mary. Cannot you do this way? Cannot you just hold yourself up, as I do?" and Florence raised her head with great dignity. At this moment the donkey stumbled—it recovered its footing instantly; but not before Florence had glided fairly over its nose, and was the next moment seated on the foot-path. The gentle animal turned aside, and began to nibble the green turf. It would not have hurt her for the world.

"Where am I?" she exclaimed, "and what has happened?"

"Why, Florence," said Mr. Percy, "you are on the ground, I think; and what has happened is just what I fully expected would happen. You have slipped over your donkey's nose. You must not fancy again, my dear child, that you can do anything well, without being taught; and even with teach-

ing, it will take a long time before one so young and so ignorant can attain perfection in anything. But come, do not distress your little heart," continued Mr. Percy, as he stooped down, and, with his handkerchief, wiped away a large tear that was gathering in her eye. "Get up, my little woman; your donkey has had its luncheon, and is much obliged to you for having dismounted so unexpectedly; and now he will carry you home to your dinner with great good will."

Chapter Fifth.

"WHERE are you going, Sarah?" said Florence, as she saw the dairy-maid, next day, opening a door which led to the court of offices. "Where are you going? May we go with you?"

"Yes, miss, you may," said Sarah, "if you please; for I am going to the poultry-yard, to feed my favourite white-topped hen, who is sitting."

"Sitting!" said Florence; "is it sitting on a chair, do you mean?"

"No, miss," said Sarah, laughing. "I do not know what the fine London hens may do; but our country hens do not sit on chairs. The hen is sitting on her nest, poor thing, hatching her eggs."

"I thought," said Florence, "the cook did that."

"The cook!" said Sarah, laughing still more. "Why, Miss Florence, that is really not the fashion of our country. Our cooks, or our dairy-maids either, have enough to do without sitting on eggs: and I doubt much if we should have the patience of these poor dumb things. I fancy the eggs would soon get cold enough."

"Well, Sarah," said Florence, with a look of indignant feeling, "you should not laugh at me so much, for that is not good of you; and that is just what my papa said. He said the cook had sent up the egg quite cold, and that it was not at all well poached."

"Poached!" repeated Sarah. "Oh, Miss Florence, I beg your pardon. I see what your mistake was:—but I said hatch, not poach. I said the hen was hatching her eggs."

"And what is hatching?" asked both the little girls.

"Why, hatching," said Sarah, "is just hatching. I cannot tell just exactly what it

means; but come with me, and I will show you; for one of her eggs was chipped this morning, and the little bird is out by this time, or I am mistaken."

The little girls followed Sarah into the hen-house, in eager expectation. She advanced towards the nest, and taking a few grains of barley, which she held in her lap, she scattered one or two of the grains on the ground. The hen stretched her neck, and looked eagerly at them.

"Yes, yes," said Sarah, as the bird slowly, and apparently most unwillingly, left her nest, "you must leave your throne, my pretty lady, and take your dinner on the other side of the door;" and, as she spoke, she threw the rest of the barley to a little distance from her. "Now," she continued, as the hen began eagerly to pick up the barley, "we must shut the door, and keep you at a distance for a little while, till we see what is going on here. There would be no peace," continued Sarah, "if the poor thing were to get in now, for she would fly at us like an angry dragon. We dare not touch her eggs if she is in the way. But look here, little

misses; and now you will know what hatching means. Look at this little curiosity of a creature."

The children bent forward to where Sarah was pointing, and were indeed astonished. Several eggs lay in the nest, looking very much like eggs generally do; but one towards the edge of the nest seemed half broken away, and out of it was appearing the head and half the body of a little chicken. It moved its little head from side to side, looking fearfully at the children; for this was its very first introduction into society, its first coming out; and no young lady, on her first appearance in the great world, could have felt more timid, or more uncertain of her powers. It fluttered its little wings, and looked as if it would very much have liked either to run or fly; but alas! it could do neither; it was as yet but half bird, half egg.

"Poor little thing," said Sarah, "it is in a sad prison-house there. I must try to give it a helping hand:" and as she spoke, she stooped down, and gently picked away part of the shell, and one leg, with a slight effort, was set free. "That is right, my little bird,"

said Sarah; "that is right—take courage. Now for it." The little bird still lingered, as if uncertain of its footing; then raising its wings, and making a sudden struggle, it placed its other leg upon the ground, and to the joy and astonishment of the children, stood before them a chicken, complete in all its members.

"Oh, how curious and how clever!" they both exclaimed, each stooping down at the same moment, ready to seize it.

"Do not," said Sarah, "do not touch it, little misses; you will hurt it, it is still so tender: and we must not now keep the mother from it, or it will die of cold, poor little thing." She opened the door as she spoke; and the hen, clapping her wings joyfully, with a chuckling noise, flew towards the nest. She stooped over it for a moment, as if arranging the eggs with her beak; then giving the little bewildered bird, which stood gazing about it, a gentle push, so as to place it more in the middle, she stepped upon the nest, and sitting down, spread her wings over it, so as entirely to shut it out from view. Mary and Florence were disappointed, to have it so

suddenly removed from sight; and the little bird itself seemed not entirely to approve of being again so speedily deprived of all that was to it so new and strange; for, as they were leaving the hen-house, they could see very plainly its little head peeping from beneath its mother's wing, and still endeavouring to look about it.

"Sister," said Florence, that evening, after they had been a little time in bed, "are you asleep?"

"Yes," said Mary, "I am: but I will awake if you have any stories to tell me. I am awake now, Florence, quite awake. I have opened my eyes wide, and I am listening: will you begin?"

"It is not a story," said Florence: "it is about the chicken I have been thinking. I cannot get to sleep for thinking of it. How curious it was, when it popped out first one foot and then another. But I do not think *foot* is the right word, for you know it had no shoes on. We must ask mamma, to-morrow, what we should say about birds, and if they have feet."

"Yes, mamma will tell us," said Mary,

"for she tells us everything we ask. D. you, remember, Florence, how we used to wonder if mamma would be a good answerer? and now we know she is the very best answerer in all the world."

"Yes," said Florence, "I think just the same about mamma, and I think so about papa, too. Do you remember how he told us such interesting things about the bees? And he promised to tell us more about them: we must ask him to-morrow. I think, Mary, we are better off in a papa and mamma than Lucy Fraser. That day I heard her say to her mamma, 'Mamma, what is that bright thing in the sky, green, and blue, and yellow?' and her mamma said, 'Do not be troublesome, my love.' Our mamma never says, when we ask her anything, 'Do not be troublesome, my love.'"

"But perhaps she would say it," answered Mary, "if we were to ask her when she was busy. You know she said that we were not to ask her anything when she was talking to papa, or when she was writing a letter, or when she was reading a book; but to wait till she was at leisure."

"Well," continued Florence, "I hope to-morrow she will not talk to papa, nor write a letter, nor read a book, for I have a great many more things I wish to know about. I want to know about those colours Lucy Fraser saw in the sky, for I saw them too, yesterday, after the rain; and I asked old Thomas, and he said it was a rainbow, and that God put it there, to show us that he would keep his promise. I wanted to ask about God's promise, but Thomas went away to his dinner. Do you know, Mary, what it can be?"

"No, I do not," said Mary; "but I am sure it will be a good promise, for God is always doing some kind of good to us. You know, mamma said he never tired of being good to us. I am so glad, now that we know about God. I like to think he is always taking care of us, and always kind. I think it is very comforting, that he is always there, and never will go away. Are you glad, too, Florence?"

"Yes," said Florence, "I am very glad. I think it was very, very interesting, all that papa and mamma told us about the world,

and about the bees, and the flowers; but the very most interesting thing was about God and Jesus Christ. You know, mamma said we should be so grateful, and that God loved grateful hearts—do you know what I am going to do about that? I am going to give all my gratitude to God; every bit that is in my heart I am going to give him. Do you think that will be a right thing to do, Mary? Will you do it too?"

"I do not know, Florence. I should like to do it, if it is a right thing: but I should like to keep some gratitude for papa and mamma too. We must ask mamma about that; and how much we may keep for her and for papa. Do not you think that they are kinder than any body in the whole world to us?"

"Yes, sister, they are: but then, you know, mamma said that it was God who put it into their hearts to be kind to us, and that he kept them alive to take care of us, and that everything we have he sends, and that we should love him first, for he is always loving us."

"Yes, always, when we are good," said

Mary. "You know mamma said, God would not love us unless we were good."

"But, sister, we are going to be always good now. I think a good plan would be to make a good resolution about it. Do you remember Aunt Douglas said it was an excellent plan to sleep on a good resolution? I will make my resolution, and it shall be, that I am never to be bad again in all my life. Will you do that too, Mary? Will you make a resolution?"

"Yes, I should like to do it very much," said Mary, "for I like to be good. But then, Florence, you know about the wicked spirit! You have forgotten about that."

"Yes, I had forgotten. But then, you know, mamma said we were to ask God to send his good Spirit into our hearts to help us; and that he would always listen to us, and do it. I wonder how big people are ever bad! and mamma says that they are. Little children like us forget sometimes, but big people do not forget: and when they know that it is the wicked spirit who is tempting them, and that God sees them always, I wonder how they can bear to be bad, and

please the wicked spirit instead of pleasing God! But I am forgetting about my good resolution; I must make it now, for I am so sleepy."

"And so am I," said Mary. "I have been holding open my eyes for a long time, and I cannot hold up my hand any more. Good night, Florence."

Chapter Sixth.

"Why are you keeping that piece of bread?" said Mary to her sister next morning, while they sat at breakfast.

"Because," whispered Florence, "I have a nice plan. You know Sarah said another little chicken would be out of the egg to-day, and I am going to keep this for the hen, that she may come off her nest, and we may see it. Have you done breakfast? Then we had better go now. We have a whole hour, you know, to play, before mamma is ready to give us our lessons."

"And is Sarah to go with us?" asked Mary.

"No, no! we do not want Sarah; we can go quite well by ourselves. You know papa

said we must learn by degrees to manage ourselves; and, perhaps, Sarah would not like us to go."

The little girls proceeded on their way. Alas, for the poor chickens! The door of the court stood open: they ran forward and found the pretty white-topped hen patiently sitting on her nest, as they had left her the night before. Florence scattered a few crumbs of the bread, as she had seen Sarah do, and the moment she got the hen to a proper distance she shut the door.

"Now, Mary," she exclaimed, greatly delighted with the success of her plan, "is not this nicely managed? But look at this; there is not another chicken out, after all! Look, there is only this little bit of its head peeping out! What a lazy chicken it must be!"

"But," said Mary, "cannot we help it to get out, as Sarah did?"

And both the little girls began to pick away the shell. Still the little bird showed no disposition to move, and Florence lost all patience.

"It is a stupid thing," she said; "it must

be a wicked chicken. Give me that little bit of stick, Mary, and I will show you what I shall do: I will make it come out."

She seated herself on the ground, put the egg in her lap, and with the stick she began, in no very gentle manner, to dig out the poor little chicken. She succeeded so far, she got it free from the shell; but its pains and pleasures were alike short in this world; it lay in Florence's lap without life or motion.

"Oh, Mary, Mary!" she exclaimed, "it is dead—quite dead! Have I killed it, do you think? Have I hurt it with the stick?"

Mary could only answer with her tears. At length she said,

"Let us take it to papa and mamma; perhaps they could make it live again."

"Oh, no!" said Florence, "they cannot make it live. Do not you remember mamma told us it was only God who could make things live. But let us go to them, for I want to tell mamma that I have been bad again. You see, Mary, it is of no use to make a good resolution, though Aunt Douglas said it was. I must ask mamma again,

what is the best thing to do, for I think I shall always go on being bad all my life." And as she spoke she got up from the ground, and ran towards the door.

The door had been easily shut; but, alas! it was beyond Florence's power, or Mary's either, to open it again; they could not reach so high as the lock to turn it, and the scene became more dismal every moment. The poor little chicken lay motionless within, the hen scraped furiously without, and the little girls, after several fruitless efforts to open the door, seated themselves on the ground, weeping bitterly.

"Mary," said Florence, looking up through her tears, "do you remember about that woman that mamma was telling papa about yesterday? Mamma said she died a victim to remorse. Mary, do you know, I think I shall die a victim to remorse too."

But before Mary had time to make a similar resolution, Florence had started to her feet. She heard some one calling on them; and the next moment the door opened, and Sarah entered. Great was her astonish-

ment to find the children there, and still greater was her anger, when she found what their employment had been.

"Well, misses," she said, in wrathful indignation, "you have made a pretty piece of work here! Was there ever such mischief-making, cruel-hearted children? It is a worse prison than this has been that you deserve; and it is well the door was between you and my poor hen, or she would have picked the very eyes out of you, that she would."

And taking the little girls by the hand, she led them towards the breakfast-parlour, where their papa and mamma were still sitting. She knocked, and was desired to enter; but being still extremely angry, her story was too confused for Mrs. Percy to make out very clearly what had happened.

"Put down that poor little dead bird on the table," said Mrs. Percy; "and leave us alone, Sarah, with the children."

Then, turning to Mary, she said, in a gentle, steady voice: "Tell me, my little girl, what has happened. Surely neither Florence nor you were cruel enough to

kill that little chicken?" And she lifted the dead chicken from the table as she spoke.

"Oh, mamma!" said Florence, in a most sorrowful tone, "do not be angry with Mary, for she did not do it. I made all the plan myself; and I kept my bread on purpose. But I did not mean to be cruel: I did not know that the stick would hurt it: and it would not come out of the shell like the other chicken, so I made the plan of the stick."

"What plan?" said Mrs. Percy; "and what stick, Florence? I do not understand this story at all. Tell me first, as distinctly as you can, how did you know there were chickens in the eggs? and how did you think of going into the poultry-yard?"

Florence then gave her papa and mamma a full account of their first visit to the poultry-yard with Sarah, the evening before; and of all that had passed through her little mind, and had since happened.

"And oh, mamma," she said, "I am very, very sorry! But I see now I cannot be good. And what am I to do about that? for

it is of no use to go to sleep on a good resolution. I will not make any good resolutions, never again in my whole life."

"Florence," said Mrs. Percy, mildly, "you are doing wrong again now, to say so. It is not in making a good resolution that you have erred; but in making it in your own strength. You have forgotten what I told you, that of yourself you can do nothing. You may, and ought to make good resolutions; but you must, at the same time, ask God for the assistance of his Holy Spirit, to enable you to keep them. You see, now, how true it is, that you have an evil nature in your heart, which you must be for ever striving to overcome. But you can only do so by the grace of God."

"Mamma, I will try again to do better; and I will try to remember to ask God to help me. But will you put away the little chicken? for it makes me sorry. And, oh!" continued Florence, tears again filling her eyes, "I thought this was to be another of our happy days, and I had so many things to ask about. I wanted to ask about the rainbow, and why God put it in the sky. And

I wanted to ask papa to take us again to the garden, and show us the bees, and tell us about the queen bee, which he said was such an interesting story. Papa, will you tell us about the queen bee to-day, though I killed the chicken?"

"No, Florence," said Mr. Percy, "not to-day. I know very well that what you say is quite true, and that you did not intend to kill the chicken; but you allow that you were angry, because it would not come out of the egg. And you know very well, that you were doing a wrong thing in stealing away to the poultry-yard by yourselves, and touching what did not belong to you. You did not wish Sarah to see you, because you knew you were wrong; and yet you were not afraid of God seeing you. You shall not, therefore, walk in the garden at all to-day, nor hear about the bees, for it is my duty, in some degree, to punish you; but still you shall hear a very interesting story, though a sad one. Go to my room, Florence, and bring down the large Bible that is lying on my table, and I shall read to your sister and you an account of the flood; and you will then

see to what a frightful degree wickedness may increase in the world, if not corrected and repented of."

Mr. Percy then read to the children the interesting account which is given in Genesis of the deluge: and pointing out to them the beautiful and gracious manner in which God, in the midst of judgment, had remembered mercy, he taught them to say by heart the following verses.

"And I will establish my covenant with you; neither shall all flesh be cut off any more by the waters of a flood; neither shall there any more be a flood to destroy the earth.

"And God said, This is the token of the covenant which I make between me and you, and every living creature that is with you, for perpetual generations:

"I do set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a token of a covenant between me and the earth.

"And it shall come to pass, when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the bow shall be seen in the cloud:

"And I will remember my covenant, which

is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh; and the waters shall no more become a flood to destroy all flesh."*

"Now, papa," said Florence, as she had finished repeating these verses, "if ever we go to visit Lucy Fraser again, I shall say to her all this that we have said, and then she will know too about the rainbow. I think it is very good of God to put it there. We shall like to see it, now that we know what it means; for it will be like God speaking to us: just like his saying, 'I will never drown you any more.'"

* Gen. ix. 11—15.

Chapter Seventh.

"Up, up! my little busy bees," said Mr. Percy, the following morning, as he entered the room where the children were seated at work, beside their mamma. "Up and away with you, my little girls! Stick in the needles, roll up the cotton-balls, lock up the work-boxes, and let us be off to the garden. The queen bee expects the honour of your company; and her majesty is too important a personage to be kept waiting."

"What a funny papa you are," said Florence. "We like it so much, when you come into the room with that droll face, and speak to us in that kind voice. Mamma, look; we have folded up our work quite neatly. May we go now, and will you come too?"

"Yes, my love: I shall follow you, perhaps; but I have a letter to write before I go out."

The children were soon equipped for their walk, and proceeded to the garden. Mr. Percy had directed Thomas to place one of the garden-chairs in front of the bee-hive, at a little distance from it; and he was quickly seated with the little girls on each side of him.

"Well," he said, "what did I tell you last time? Oh, it was about the wax-workers."

"Yes, papa," said Florence, "and about the honey-bags, and the bees getting their dinners, and their little servants standing behind their chairs."

"Behind their chairs!" said Mr. Percy. "No, no, Florence; I do not think I said any thing of chairs."

"No, papa, you did not," said Florence, laughing; "but I was thinking of people instead of bees, I fancy."

"Well," said Mr. Percy, "I promised to tell you about the queen bee, who is a person of great importance in the hive; yet I have

never heard that they give even her majesty a chair to sit on. They, however, show her the greatest respect and attention: she is the mother over them all, and they love her, and obey her in everything. If they lose their queen by any accident, they are in the greatest grief: they do not care to eat; they cannot settle to work; the whole hive gets into a state of confusion; they go wandering up and down, seeking for their royal mother in every corner. When the gardener sees this happen, he sometimes is able to get a new queen for them from another hive; but he is obliged to wait till the bees have forgotten their former queen, or they will not receive the stranger. If she is introduced into the hive, about twelve hours after the loss of their own queen, how do you think she is treated?"

"I do not know, papa," said Mary, "but I hope they do not kill her."

"No, they do not kill her at once, as they easily could, by stinging her to death, as they do to a poor snail, should it chance to crawl into the hive. They think, I suppose, that this mode of proceeding would not be

proper respect to a queen. When she appears amongst them, they run up to her at first with great joy; but soon perceiving she is a stranger, they put her instantly into prison. They set a guard of bees round her, to prevent her leaving the hive, or getting any food. When those bees who watch her are hungry, others take their places, and they surround her in this way till they have starved her to death."

"Poor thing!" said Mary; "I wish they would not be so cruel. But what do they do, papa, when they have forgotten their own queen?"

"Why, in that case," said Mr. Percy, "she is very differently treated. If twenty-four hours are over before the stranger is introduced to them, they suppose she is the queen they have been in search of, and she is received with the greatest delight. The news of her arrival soon spreads through the hive, and with joy unspeakable they rush forward to show her respect and attention: they surround her in a circle, and vibrating their wings, with a joyful humming noise, offer her the refreshment of honey, and wel-

come their royal mother to the hearts of her faithful subjects, and all the sweets of home. Then, falling back, they give way to others, who press forward, to show her the same po lite attention."

"And if the gardener cannot find another queen, papa, what do they do then?" said Florence.

"Why, my love, this is more curious still," said Mr. Percy. "Many of those cells you saw the other day have not honey in them, but the eggs of the queen mother. There is an egg in each cell: after three days the egg becomes a little grub, or worm. For five days the bees feed this worm with bee-bread: they then close up the mouth of the cell with wax, that it may not be disturbed in its work, and the worm begins to spin a little covering for itself, which is called a cocoon. It takes twenty-four hours to spin this web, in which it wraps itself; and then lies for several days in a state of repose, before it is transformed into a bee. When this transformation takes place, it bursts from its place of confinement a complete bee, ready either to run or fly. But before leaving its quiet

resting-place, that nothing may be lost, it fastens its skin, which it has worn as a worm, to the walls of its cell; and so, with a spirit of truly active benevolence, papers it neatly, to prepare the room for the reception of the next little worm which may chance to lodge there."

"Oh, papa!" said Florence, "how curious! This is the most wonderful thing you have ever told us. But then, how do they get a new queen bee? Do any of those worms grow into a queen bee?"

"Yes, my love. It has lately been discovered that the bees have a particular way of feeding a worm, so that it should become a queen bee; and in expectation of its doing so, they prepare for it a royal cell. They pull down one of the arches, so as to make two cells into one; and so prepare a larger apartment for the reception of their royal mistress. But come now," continued Mr. Percy, "let us move about a little, for the heat in this spot is very oppressive."

"And have you no more to tell us about bees?" said Mary, in a sorrowful tone.

"Why, my love, I think I have now told

you all you can understand about garden-bees."

"And are there any other bees, except garden-bees?"

"Yes, my love, there are wild bees, which live in hollow trees, or in rocks; and all those which live together in this way, whether in the garden or the woods, are called social bees. But there are also solitary bees, where each bee builds a nest for itself; and there are many different kinds of this species. There is the mason-bee, which builds its nest with very small particles of stone and mud, or of sand and mortar from old walls, which it glues together with the moisture from its mouth. And there are carpenter-bees, which build in wood, and manage with their jaws to chisel a hole large enough for their nests. And there are leaf-cutting, or upholsterer-bees, which construct their nest of leaves. But the nicest and cleverest of these little upholsterers is the poppy-bee. This dear little thing makes a hole, generally in the side of a bank, in the ground, and hangs the walls of its little chamber all round with bright scarlet tapestry, from

the leaves of the poppy. No royal tent is more beautifully arranged. She cuts off little pieces of an oval shape, and carries them off between her legs, and covers the walls all round, two or three leaves in thickness. If the piece is too large, she pares off what is unnecessary, and carries away the shreds; she never leaves any little bits lying about, to look untidy, but keeps this little chamber in the greatest order; and from her making choice of the scarlet poppy, seems to have as good taste in ornamenting her room as we could have, and still greater neatness. We could not touch those tender leaves without their shrivelling; but this little creature contrives to lay them on with the smoothness of glass. She has not the gift of reason; but the benevolent Creator of all things has given her the gift of instinct in such a degree that nothing for the comfort of the young bee, for whom she wishes to provide, is neglected. This scarlet lining is to exclude the air, that her nest may be warm and dry. Her next care is to fill the cell half full of a paste of farina, from the flowers and honey. In this paste she de-

posits an egg, so that when the worm comes out of the egg, it has food already prepared for it, sufficient to last till it becomes a bee, when it pierces through its scarlet covering, and flies merrily into the air."

"I like to hear those stories of bees very much, papa," said Florence: "I wish they would never be done. But how do you know all this? Do you find it out yourself?"

"No, my love: but I have read several books upon the subject. Most of what I have told you now, is from a book published by Huber; who, though he lost his sight when still a very young man, with the assistance of his wife, has made many wonderful discoveries with regard to bees. His son has also written on this subject. And the son has published a most interesting account of ants also."

"Of aunts, papa!" said Florence; "do you mean aunts like Aunt Douglas?"

"No, my love; not aunts like Aunt Douglas," said Mr. Percy, laughing; "though I have no doubt that species would also form a very interesting volume The ants I

have been speaking of are very small insects, which I will show you, one of these days, in our walks. But now go and amuse yourselves in your little gardens, for I wish to return into the house, and see what has detained your mamma so long."

Chapter Eighth.

"WELL," said Mr. Percy, one evening, looking up from the book he was reading, "what is it, Florence? what have you to say?"

"Papa," answered the little girl, "I have been waiting till you were at leisure; waiting patiently."

"Patiently!" repeated Mr. Percy, smiling; "why, Florence, you have been walking round and round my chair, clearing your little throat to excite attention, and pulling the skirts of my coat at every turn. Is that your idea of patience? Yes, certainly you have not spoken; and that is pretty well for your first attempt in this necessary virtue. So now I am at leisure: I have put down my book. What is it, my little girl, you wish to say?"

"Papa, I was in your room just now, and I saw a book."

"Several, I should suppose," said Mr Percy.

"Yes, several," continued Florence; "but there was one that looked like a book for us: one that is a story-book, I am sure."

"Yes," said Mr. Percy, "you are quite right; it is a story-book, and it is for you. I saw that book yesterday, lying on the counter in the bookseller's shop in Worcester, and the title-page caught my eye. Mr. Brooks assured me that he knew the parties concerned, and that it was a story quite calculated for little people, such as you."

"And what is it called?" exclaimed both the little girls at once.

"It is called, 'The Apple-Pie; or, some Passages in the Lives of Charles and Emily. A True Story,'"

"Oh, papa," said Florence, "how good of you to buy it for us! I am sure we shall understand it; and I am sure we shall like it, for we like the name so very much. 'The Apple-Pie;' what a nice name!"

"And what a nice thing!" said Mr. Percy,

smiling. "My love," he continued, turning to Mrs. Percy, "this is a beautiful evening. Suppose we were to drink tea in the arbour in the garden: and while you and the little girls sit at work, I will read this story to them."

Mrs. Percy gave a willing assent; and the children ran joyfully off to inform Norris of the intended pleasure, and to assist her in preparing for it. Florence was all bustle and activity; and soon, by her exertions, in insisting on sweeping the ground in the arbour, had raised such a cloud of dust, that neither she herself, nor the tea-cups and saucers which Norris had so nicely arranged, were for some time discernible. But it was impossible to be very angry with Florence; and Norris contented herself with catching, with some difficulty, the almost invisible little agent of so much mischief, and detaining her on her knee till Mary, by her directions, had, with her little watering-pan, somewhat allayed the storm. Florence's next proposal was to fill the slop-basin, for the middle of the tea-tray, with flowers; but on its being represented by Norris that this, though a

pretty, was not a convenient arrangement, she contented herself with strewing the flowers on the ground, and, with the assistance of Mary and old Thomas, twining the door-posts with roses and evergreens. These preparations were scarcely finished, when their papa and mamma made their appearance. Mr. Percy with the anxiously expected little book, and Mrs. Percy with her work-basket: and after all had partaken of tea, and the nice sweet cakes Norris had provided, the tea-table was cleared; and the little girls having had their work arranged so as not to disturb their mamma, Mr. Percy opened the book and read as follows:

THE APPLE-PIE:

OR,

SOME PASSAGES IN THE LIVES OF

CHARLES AND EMILY.

A TRUE STORY

CHARLES and Emily were tolerably good, and generally happy children: they were indulged, but not spoilt. But it is the regular custom, in all histories, to describe the hero

and heroine at great length. I cannot promise my young readers to do exactly this, for these little people were rather short of their age; but still I can tell you that Charles was a bright, good-looking boy, with fine hazel eyes, and brown curly hair; and Emily was a fair, blue-eyed girl, with dimples in her cheeks when she smiled, (and she was often smiling,) and with a better nose than little girls of nine years old generally have.

The next thing that should be done, is to describe their father's property:—the lofty mountains, towering in proud magnificence behind the ancient castle; the wide-spreading park, on which numerous herds of deer were seen grazing; and the deep, dark forests, which sheltered them from the heat of the noon-day sun. My young friends, you must forgive me, I can tell you of none of those things. Charles and Emily lived in a low white cottage, in a little garden, at the end of a village; and the principal hero of my tale is an apple-pie. I may mention, however, that Emily slept in a

small room next to Charles's, containing a pretty little bed, with white dimity curtains, a wash-hand stand, a chest of drawers, a little table, on which lay her Bible and prayer-book, and a chair. There was likewise a box, which contained her Sunday's bonnet, and which served as a seat for Charles, when he did her the honour to pay her a visit in her apartment. On the window-shutter hung a pretty wicker cage, with her favourite bird: and, on a bright morning, it was little Emily's pride and pleasure to be up with the lark. From her window she could see many beautiful orchards, and the village church, and village clock. So all these little matters were nicely arranged:—the sexton regulated the clock, the clock regulated the lark, and the lark regulated little Emily.*

* Let no dull critic question how this could be. Emily's lark may have been a bird of a sleepy head and time serving habits. If birds are shut up in cages, mistakes will happen. I knew a blackbird once who lived and died in fearful ignorance, mistaking, to the last hour of its existence, an oil lamp for the bright and blessed sun. The Drummond light would have

Among many indulgences bestowed on those children by their kind parents, perhaps that of the Saturday's supper was esteemed the most. If no very serious fault had been committed during the week, it was their papa's custom to read to them some interesting story on the Saturday evenings, while they were busy with their different employments. A basket of working materials was placed before Mrs. Seymour, and Emily assisted her mamma in making little frocks and caps for the poor children in the village, while Charles busied himself with his pencil: and wonderful were the birds, dogs, cats, and lions which he produced, with their names printed below, in large letters; a precaution which he had adopted ever since that disastrous night when little

been a far less pitiable error. But to this bird, alas! the wonders of nature were unknown: few romantic events chequered its little life. The mysteries of boiling, roasting, and frying, moved before it in dull succession; to it the fumes of gravy-soup were as the sweet breath of spring, and green peas its most refreshing verdure:—it lived and died in the kitchen of an inn.

Emily had mistaken one of the birds for a lion.

The supper which succeeded those evenings was most pleasant. The curds and cream at top, the artichokes in the middle, and the fruit-tart at bottom, were delightful.

One morning, as Emily lay in bed, listening to the lark, some one tapped at the door, and Charles's voice was heard exclaiming:

"Emily! Emily! what are you about? Still in bed, listening to that solitary bird, while the sun is shining out so warm, and ten thousand birds are in the birch wood, singing loud and charming! Up, up, my lady bright! we shall have time for a delightful ramble before my school-hour."

Emily was up in a moment. She dressed herself hastily; and still more hastily did she hurry over her prayers: not once pausing to consider in whose presence she was kneeling, or to ask from the heart for that assistance without which no little girl can be

kept from temptation for a day, or even for an hour.

The morning proved quite as warm and bright as Charles had promised it would be. And numerous butterflies seemed to be of the same opinion: they were careering through the meadows in quick succession, now dipping for a moment into the bright yellow buttercups, now darting again through the clear blue sky, in happy freedom. Charles and Emily were soon in eager pursuit of a lovely creature with golden wings. They, too, seemed to fly through the air, their little feet scarcely brushing the dew-drops from the daisied turf. The butterfly settled for a moment on a bluebell. Oh, happy Emily! holding her breath, advancing on tip-toe, and stealing softly upon it, she darted down, exclaiming joyfully, "I have caught it! I have caught it!" But the butterfly was happier still:—sliding through her slender fingers, it soared into the air, rejoicing again in life and liberty.

"It is time for us to return home," said Charles, in a tone of disappointment. "You have let it go just when I thought all was

safe, and we have no time for another chase after those slippery eels."

"Eels!" said Emily; "I thought eels were fish. Now, Charles, this is just as bad as my mistaking your bird for a lion, which made you so angry."

"It is not the same in the least," said Charles; "but it is that you, Emily, do not understand metaphor."

"Metaphor!" said Emily, looking quite puzzled. "Oh, Charles, I wish you had never gone to school! you say so many things now which I do not understand."

"Well, Emily, you should go to school too. I wish you had been with us the other day, when our master took us to visit the Infant School. There was a little girl there, sitting at the end of the form, who was not four years old; her feet could not nearly reach the ground; and when the master bid them clap their hands, she always lost her balance, and tumbled upon the floor. Oh, it was so funny! And yet she understood metaphor, and knew about an acute angle, and an obtuse angle. If you were to go, Emily, you would be sadly awkward: I

fear they would call you an obtuse angle."

"Then I will not go, Charles; for I do not like to be called bad names. My mamma never calls me obtuse angle, nor metaphor neither: she calls me little Emily; and I always understand what she says."

"Well, little Emily, here is something you can understand; here is Tom, the baker's boy, coming along with a most magnificent pie. How nice it looks! and, oh, how deliciously it smells! Where are you going, Tom, with that superlative pie?"

"Sir, it is an apple-pie, master says; and I am going with it to your house."

"Oh," said Emily, "it is the apple-pie mamma ordered for supper to-night. You know Uncle and Aunt Seymour were to arrive on Wednesday evening, and this is Wednesday."

"Yes," said Charles, looking wistfully at the apple-pie; "it is Wednesday, and we sit up to supper only on Saturdays."

Tom was meanwhile moving off with the apple-pie.

"Stop, Tom!" said Charles; "stop only

for one moment, and let me look a it again."

But Tom only quickened his movements. The children followed him into the garden; but already he was within the house, and the threatened danger seemed averted. Presently, however, a key was heard to turn in a door, and the cook entering the pantry and advancing to a table in the window, placed the apple-pie upon it, and leaving the room without perceiving the children outside the window, locked the door again, and put the key in her pocket.

"She is a dear old blind beetle," said Charles. "She never saw us, though we were right before her the whole time. Now Emily! now for it! We shall at least have another peep;" and advancing to the window, he placed a couple of bricks on the ground, and standing upon them, he gently lifted the sash, and pulled the apple-pie towards him.

"Well, Emily, I do think it the most delightful pie I ever saw. How nice it smells! and it is so high and puffy, I am sure it is crammed full of apples—it is too full. I do not think a few of the apples

ever could be missed: and here is a spoon lying beside it, just as if it had been put there on purpose. I could raise up the crust a little, a very little at the edge, with my pen-knife, and take out a spoonful. Eh, Emily! what do you think?"

"Think!" said Emily, "I think they would be very sweet and nice. I saw mamma give out a whole cupful of sugar."

"I was not thinking of the sugar," said Charles; and he closed the knife which he had just opened. There was a pause—the children stood looking at each other.

"There is no one in the garden," whispered Emily, looking timidly around her.

"No, not a soul," answered her brother; and hastily opening his knife again, he raised the crust, and handed Emily a spoonful of the apples.

"Oh, how good they are!" she exclaimed. "They are the very best I ever tasted." Charles seemed to think so too. Spoonful after spoonful did he share with his sister, till none remained behind: then carefully putting down the crust again, he shut the window, removed the bricks, and darted into

the house, where he vainly attempted to finish his breakfast as usual; but finding that impossible, he hurried off to school.

Emily, meanwhile, spent rather an uncomfortable day. It is true, she did not view her fault with those repentant feelings which would have led her to confess all to her mamma, and on her knees, to ask pardon of that God whose commandments she had broken; and to implore the aid of his Holy Spirit, to guard her against future temptation; but still she was at times very unhappy, and she gave more than common attention to her lessons, in the hope of banishing unpleasant recollections. Her mamma was exceedingly pleased with her.

"My little Emily has given me the greatest satisfaction to-day," said Mrs. Seymour. "I can scarcely tell my little girl how happy it makes her mamman to see her so docile and attentive."

Emily blushed scarlet: it was the blush of shame. Her mamma's praises, which in general were so delightful to her, now only increased her distress.

"My child," said Mrs. Seymour, "my Emily, you are not well?"

"Quite well, mamma; perfectly well," answered Emily, in a hurried manner.

"Then go, darling, and run about in the garden, and amuse yourself; you have done quite enough to-day. And before dinner go to Susan, and tell her to put on your white frock, and make you as neat as possible. You know we expect your uncle and aunt this evening; and I think," added Mrs. Seymour, tapping her fondly on the right shoulder, "I think my little girl well deserves to wear her badge of merit to-day. Your aunt will rejoice to see you with that."

Emily hurried off, not to enjoy herself in the garden, as her kind mamma had intended, but to sit quite still and sorrowful in the arbour, glancing every now and then at the pantry-window, with strong feelings of remorse, and vainly wishing she could restore the apples to the apple-pie, and her little self to the happiness of the day before. The breeze blew softly upon her, the birds were singing cheerily in the branches, and

the blossoms were upon the bough; but to Emily there was no freshness in the gale, no beauty in the blossoms, no gladness in the song of the birds. She had been accustomed in such moments, when all nature was smiling around her, to lift up her little heart to that gracious God, who had covered the earth with verdure and the fields with flowers. But how look up to Him whose commandments she had broken, and whose forgiveness she had not implored? At the sound of the village clock striking four, she got up hastily, and ran into the house to get dressed for dinner. As she entered her room, her lark fluttered his wings joyfully, and stretching up his little throat, poured forth one of his sweetest songs.

"I wish he would be quiet, and let me alone," said Emily. "What a noise he is making!"

"Let you alone," said Susan; "why, what harm is the bird doing you? Fye, for shame, Miss Emily, you are out of humour."

"You have no business to say so to

me," answered Emily. "My mamma says you are to put on my white frock, and make me ready for dinner."

Susan did as she was desired. The white frock was put on, and her hair nicely brushed.

"What sash did your mamma say you were to wear?" asked Susan.

Emily pulled out the drawer where her sashes were kept. There lay in a little box, nicely lined with pink paper, her badge of merit. It was a white satin ribbon, which was worn across the right shoulder, and the words, "For a good little girl," were worked upon it, with pink silk. Emily lifted it out of the box, and looked at it steadily for a moment.

"No, I dare not, I must not wear it," she whispered to herself. "'For a good little girl!' Oh, I am not that." And hastily replacing it in the box, she lifted out her blue sash, and put it into Susan's hands, without uttering a word.

The sash was tied on, and Emily proceeded to the drawing-room. As she entered, Mrs. Seymour was seated at the table, writing a

letter, and she did not look up. Glad of this relief, Emily crept softly into a recess in the window, and took up a book. For a few minutes all was still: presently she heard the rustling of paper, as if her mamma were folding a letter.

"Come out of your hole, you quiet little mouse: come out of your hole," said Mrs. Seymour, "and light the taper, for me to seal my letter. You are a good little girl not to disturb mamma."

Emily advanced and did as she was desired. Mrs. Seymour still sat with her back towards her, and hastily placing the lighted taper on the table, she was again about to return into her hiding-place.

"Come round, my love," said Mrs. Seymour, "and hold the taper for me."

Poor guilty Emily! Trembing violently, and with her face and neck covered with blushes, she stood before her mamma. Mrs. Seymour glanced for a moment, first at Emily's disturbed countenance, and then at her blue sash. She saw something was wrong; but she forbore all inquiry. It was her general custom to visit her children in

the evening, after they were in bed; and in those quiet moments to talk to them in the most affectionate way, of the errors she saw in their dispositions; and to hear from them the faults of which they had been guilty during the day, and for which they had already asked the forgiveness of Heaven. She trusted, that at night Emily would tell her all; and she felt assured, that the uncomfortable feelings which her little girl was meanwhile experiencing, were calculated to make still more impressive all she could say to her regarding her fault, whatever that fault might be.

Emily did not see her brother till they met at dinner, so she had no opportunity of communicating any of her uncomfortable feelings to him. He seemed, however, fully to share them—he looked grave and unhappy: but Mr. Seymour was engaged in giving his wife an account of a railway which had been completed in their neighbourhood, and which he had just returned from visiting, and no notice was taken of the children. After dinner they went out to walk with their papa and mamma; and when tea

was over they seated themselves at the open window, which looked upon the village, that they might watch for the arrival of their uncle and aunt. In this interesting occupation they forgot for a while their sorrows.

The air was soft and balmy: the west wind, steeped in the fragrance of the lime-flower and the honeysuckle, blew refreshingly on their faces, and gently waved the curls in Emily's hair. The sun had just gone down, leaving the sky richly streaked with gold and purple, and they were soon deeply engrossed in fancying castles in the air, and tracing mountains in the fleecy clouds. There was a sweet hum of bees in the lime-trees, and the merry voices of the village children swept along at intervals on the freshening breeze.

"Hark!" said Emily. "Hark! Charles, I hear a carriage; I am sure I do. Listen! do listen!"

"I hear it quite well," said Charles; "but that is not the sound of a carriage: it is a cart, I am sure." And, as he spoke, the baker's cart, with his horse in full trot, appeared in view.

"How clever of you to guess that!" said Emily. "But what is that sound now? is it the wind? No, it is a carriage. I hear it quite well. They are coming! They are coming, indeed, Charles! Oh, do say it is a carriage!"

"No," said her brother, "for I do not think it. But hush!" and he held down his ear to listen. "If I were in the garden now, I would put my ear down to the ground, and be quite sure. But I am almost sure it is a gig:" and the next moment the village apothecary, in all the proud consciousness of possessing his first acquisition in the carriage line, namely, a smart new gig, with a yellow body, and red wheels, whirled past, exclaimed: "How do you do, Master Charles? Good evening, Miss Emily. Sorry I cannot stop a moment to inquire for your mamma and papa. Desperately hurried indeed! Never could get on without this clever little affair! Passed your uncle and aunt half an hour ago!" And off and out of sight he was in a moment.

"Now do tell me, Charles," said Emily, "how you knew this was a gig, before you

saw it; for I am afraid you are growing a conjuror."

"Do you remember," said her brother, "that delightful Saturday evening, when papa took you on his knee, and I stood at his side listening; and he told us those interesting stories of the American Indians; and how they could go upon your trail, and trace your footsteps in the grass, or even upon the beaten road: and how they put their ear down to the ground, and could hear sounds when there were no sounds; that is, I mean, when to us all on earth seemed still, not a whisper even in the heavens? I remember papa said this, or something like this; something which sounded fine and mysterious, and which I liked very much; and I resolved that very night that I would try to study sounds like the Indians; and I can make out a carriage, a cart, and a gig, pretty well. But huzza! where have both our ears been now!" exclaimed Charles, as the carriage, with their uncle and aunt, drove rapidly through the village, and stopped at the garden gate. The next moment the children were in their arms.

"How well those dear children look, sister," said their aunt, as she entered, holding a hand of each. "My little Emily is blooming like a rose."

"It is the joy of your arrival that has given her that colour," said Mrs. Seymour, "for Emily has been looking uncommonly pale all day."

"Come now, sister, you must not say so, for that is a prelude to sending her to bed, I fear. Now you must not refuse my first request, and that is, that both the children should sit up to supper to-night."

"But we are not to be quite alone," said Mrs. Seymour; "I asked our kind neighbours, the Drummonds, to come and meet you. We shall not have room for them."

"Oh! I shall contrive that," said their aunt: "so now you have consented."

Charles and Emily clapped their hands. "Thank you, aunt! Thank you!" they both exclaimed, joyfully.

Suddenly they stopped. Certain recollections seemed to rise to the memory of both. They looked at each other and were silent.

The hour of supper arrived. They were somewhat relieved to find that there was not room for them at the table. Anxiously they watched each dish as it was brought in, and their spirits rose as no apple-pie appeared.

"Charles," said Mr. Seymour, "do you and your sister take, each of you, the easy-chair, by the fire-side." They seated themselves. Emily's feet did not nearly touch the ground: she sat bolt upright, casting many anxious glances towards her opposite brother, and looking as if her chair of state were indeed no bed of roses.

"Are these dear, patient little creatures, to get nothing?" said their aunt. "Sister, you are forgetting them entirely."

"Oh, no!" said Mrs. Seymour, "I have not forgotten them. There is nothing on the table fit for them at present; but there is something coming by-and-by which they shall have their share of. Or, perhaps," continued Mrs. Seymour, "it would be as well to ring now, for I am anxious they should go to bed. Charles, my love, ring the bell for the apple-pie." Charles obeyed

in trembling; and a few minutes after, Susan placed the apple-pie on the table.

"Now do let me cut it up," said their aunt, "for I must, positively, have the pleasure of helping these dear children." She cut a piece of the crust, which she laid aside, and inserted the spoon, which, after a swift circuit round an empty world, was returned to her plate again in undiminished lustre.

"Why, how is this!" exclaimed Mr. Seymour: "the fruit must have been extracted; the apple-pie is empty, actually empty! We must inquire into this immediately. Charles, ring again."

"Susan," said Mr. Seymour, when she appeared, "who brought this apple-pie here this morning."

"It was the baker's boy; little Tom, sir."

"Little rascal, rather!" replied Mr. Seymour, "or little thief we may say. Well, I shall speak to his master to-morrow, and insist, as the greatest favour I can do the boy, that he should be soundly whipped: it may save him from a worse fate. Many a one has ended his days on the gallows, who has

begun his career of vice by no greater theft."

During this dialogue, Charles's head had sunk down lower and lower on his breast, so as entirely to conceal his face. He trembled violently; and Emma felt afraid he would have dropped from his seat. Suddenly he raised his head, and looked up; his countenance had resumed its usual expression: and the deep sense of guilt which the moment before seemed weighing him to the ground, appeared suddenly to have been removed.

"How can he forget so soon, and be so bold about it?" thought Emily; and great was her relief when, after having swallowed with difficulty a piece of bread and jelly, which more than once threatened to stick in her throat, she and her brother were dismissed to bed.

But Emily's pillow brought no repose. She had not dared to kneel down as usual, and offer up her evening prayer; for she felt she could not ask pardon of her heavenly Father for a fault which it was still her earnest wish and intention to conceal from

her earthly parent. She had desired Susan to leave her shutters open, for she felt afraid of being left in the dark: and she lay gazing on the moon, and trembling when a passing cloud obscured for a moment its silver light. Suddenly it became hid from her view, and the room was in utter darkness. Emily could bear it no longer: she sprang from her bed, and softly opened the door of Charles's room. He seemed not yet to have been in bed: his candle was burning on the table, where his Bible lay open, and he was kneeling in prayer. Emily stood for a moment irresolute, and struck with awe; then softly creeping back to her room, she lay listening till she heard Charles getting into bed.

"Oh, Charles," she exclaimed, "I am so unhappy! I cannot get to sleep! Whenever I shut my eyes, something always whispers in my ear, '*Thou shalt not steal!*' What can it be?"

"It is conscience, Emily."

"Oh, then I do wish it had whispered to us in the garden!"

"It did," said Charles. "Do you remem-

ber when I closed my penknife? It whispered then; but I would not listen."

"But," said Emily, "one good thing is, that mamma will not visit us to-night; it is so late. Do you think, Charles, that papa or mamma will ever find it out?"

"Find it out!" exclaimed her brother. "Emily, do you really think I shall go to sleep before I have confessed all? Shall Tom be whipped? Shall Tom be called a thief, and I the guilty person? No, Emily, no! I am only waiting till the company go away. Hush! I hear them in the passage at this moment: I hear papa saying good-night. It is the outer door that was shut just now: yes, I am sure it was." And Charles jumped out of bed, and wrapped the coverlid about him.

"Stay for me," said Emily; "oh, do stay one moment, Charles! let me go also, and help you to tell it all." And throwing her flannel gown about her, they descended the stairs together. At the back of the dining-room door Charles paused.

"What are you about, brother?" said Emily; "are you going back?"

"No, Emily, no. I am saying something holy to God: I am asking him to give me strength." And he knocked boldly.

The door was opened by his papa.

"Charles! Emily!" exclaimed Mr. and Mrs. Seymour at once: "is it possible! My dear children, why are you here? are you ill?"

"No, papa, no! but Tom must not be whipped: Tom is not a thief; but I—but I am," sobbed Charles. "Oh, papa! I was like the wicked serpent; I tempted Emily, and we eat."

"No, no, papa!" said Emily; "he was not like the serpent; I was quite as bad. He did not tempt me; I asked him for spoonful after spoonful; I said the apples were the sweetest I had ever tasted. I was quite wicked also."

"My dear Mr. Seymour," said her aunt, while tears filled her eyes, as she stood looking at the trembling little culprits before her; "my dear Mr. Seymour, do let me intercede for these poor children: they have already been sufficiently punished by their own conscious feelings; and they have

greatly atoned for their fault by this voluntary confession. Oh, do not punish them further!"

"No, sister," said Mr. Seymour, "this cannot be. Had they concealed so great a fault, had they allowed another, who was innocent, to suffer for their guilt, I scarcely know any punishment they would not have deserved: they have, however, by this confession, so far, acted as they ought to have done: and to themselves I shall leave the nature of their punishment. Say, Charles, what shall it be?"

"Banish us for six weeks, papa, from the Saturday evening supper," said the trembling boy, in a voice scarcely audible. "Banish us, papa: you cannot punish more than that."

"Well, my dear children, let it be so. No, sister, no!" said Mr. Seymour, as he saw their aunt about still to intercede for them; "no, my dear sister, not another word on the subject. And now, Charles and Emily, come with me, and let me hear you ask pardon of your heavenly Father, for having so grievously broken his commandments, and

to-morrow I shall talk further to you of this matter."

Mr. Seymour did talk to them next morning, in the most impressive way: and I am happy to assure my young readers, that this was the first and the last dishonest action ever committed by Charles and Emily.

"And is it done—quite done?" exclaimed both the little girls, as Mr. Percy closed the book. "Oh, how sorry I am!"

"I thought," said Mary, "it looked very long before you began, but now I think it very short; quite a great deal too short. Oh, I wish you were at the beginning again, papa! I was so happy when you were reading that part, 'Some Passages in the Lives of Charles and Emily.' Charles and Emily! what pretty names! Florence, what part did you like the best?"

"I do not know," said Florence; "I liked a great many places so much. I liked when they were chasing the butterfly: and when they were sitting at the window, and the wind blew on Emily's hair, and she heard a car-

riage; and I think it was very interesting at that part where they sat opposite to each other, on two large easy-chairs, and Mr Seymour said, 'Ring the bell, Charles.'"

"And I," said Mary, "liked that place the best, where Charles said, 'Shall Tom be whipped? Shall Tom be called a thief, and I the guilty person?'"

"Yes," said Florence, "I think, too, that was the best place. I wonder if we should have said that. Papa, do you think we should?"

"I hope so, my love. I hope you will ever feel, that till you have confessed your fault, and asked forgiveness for it, there can be no peace in your own mind."

"And are there no other stories, papa? I think you were not at the end of all the pages when you shut the book. Is there another story for you to read to us?"

"Yes," said Mr. Percy, "there is a short story, called 'Little Mouse; but short as it is, we must leave it till another evening, for it is late. We must return into the house now: it is almost time for you to go to bed. At another time I shall read it to you."

"Thank you, papa, that is very nice; very nice that we have some more pleasure to think about. We shall not forget to ask you for the story of 'Little Mouse.' We shall remember the name quite well. Shall we not, Mary?"

Chapter Ninth.

The improvement in the characters of the little girls was visible and progressive. Mary, timid and gentle by nature, was much more open to conviction, and less obstinate than formerly; and Florence seldom now gave way to passion: and though still frequently disobedient, her fits of remorse were really heart-rending, and her vows of amendment most fervent and sincere. With old Thomas they were most especial favourites, and both were equally active about him in their different ways—Mary always ready to bring him his tools, and all he could want; and Florence to steal them away. Sorely was the old man's patience sometimes tried, when looking all over the garden for his dibble, Florence would assure him, that though she

could not remember what hole she had stuffed it into, it was quite a proper hole for a dibble.

"Oh, Miss Florence! Miss Florence!" he would say, "mony is the weary wander you give me: you are as full o' mischief as an egg is full o' meat."

"And, Thomas," Florence would answer, laughing, "you know you like eggs very much, but little girls a great deal better."

If deeds, not words, were to be trusted, old Thomas certainly did; and many a pleasant surprise had they, when in visiting their gardens, they found one day a rose-bush, loaded with flowers, and next, pinks and carnations, fully blown. Thomas had a great variety of flowers in pots, and from them he decked out the children's gardens; for though they had been tolerably patient for two whole days, during the coming up of the mustard-seed, it would have been too much to expect, that just at first they should be so, while waiting for those seeds which require weeks or months to come to maturity. He gave them, however, a great deal of useful instruction, as to raising flowers from seeds,

and assured them that there were many that could only be brought to perfection by being raised in this manner. And he said, that if it was God's will to spare them all to another summer, he would give them seeds to plant at the proper time, and then they should have sweet-peas, lupines, and mignonette, in as great perfection as he had in his garden.

Mary was very anxious to have some laurel bushes planted between their gardens to make a pretty green fence; and she asked if he had any laurel-seeds, and if they would take long to grow up as tall as she was.

"If you will plant them for us," she said, "we will be very patient: we waited two days for the mustard-seed, and we will wait six days for the laurels. Shall we not, Florence?"

But Mary's countenance fell, when Thomas told her that it would take nearly six years for the laurels to be raised from seed to her height.

"Oh, that will never do!" she exclaimed in a sorrowful tone. "That would be longer than to the end of summer: and you have no

laurels in pots. What a pity, Florence! What shall we do for a green fence?"

Florence could not tell: she could only say, that it was not at all pretty to have that wide space without anything growing upon it.

"Well, do not vex your little hearts," said the kind old man. "Come away with me, and choose your laurels; and a green fence you shall have, before two days are over your heads. Some folk would make it even a shorter job: they would follow after the auld fashion, and never mind how muckle they cut and smashed at the roots, and rugged the bushes out o' the earth one way. But thanks to that honourable gentleman, Sir Henry Stuart, and my Scotch edication, I ken better. It will be lang till the like o' that improvement come out o' England. They say we hae nae trees; but there is only this sma' difference, we not only hae them in a natural way, but we hae them for the wishing for them. Wi' us it is a bare moor the day, and a bonny wood the morn. See when sic a warld's wonder will be acted here. No that I am going to disparage the land here

for it is a bonny land, and a gude ane; and it isna right to be puffed up, even wi' this superiority in the planting way, and nae doubt they will learn in time; everything maun hae a beginning."

Mary and Florence only understood from this oration, that in time they were to learn to plant laurel-bushes: and they assured Thomas that they would try to do the very next themselves, if he would only make haste, and pull up quick the one he was digging round: but they soon found that there was no pulling up quick in the business. Most carefully did he dig round, gently disengaging every root from the earth, and taking care not to break the slightest fibre. The hole made to receive the laurel was big enough to allow of the roots being carefully spread out at their full length, on each side. The bush being placed exactly in the centre of the hole, the earth was then covered in, a thick bed of moss laid round the plant, and a plentiful watering given, which he said must be repeated daily, and a couple of mats hung up on poles, to protect it from the sun.

The children would hardly have had patience for this detailed mode of proceeding, for it certainly took fully two days to complete the fence, had they not, during the hours they were watching Thomas, beguiled the time by asking him various questions, as to his former manner of life.

"And have you no little girls of your own to be kind to you?" said Mary.

"I have grandchildren, Miss Mary," said the old man; "all my own little ones it was God's will to take from me, in their early youth, except one daughter. She was lang a sickly child: and when my bonny olive-branches, that looked sae life like, one by one were cut off, and their mother sae soon followed after, she was only left, I then thought, to be a burden to her poor father. But soon was I brought, by God's grace, to see the sinfulness of such thoughts; and she has been spared to be mair than a daughter to me: and her bonny bairns to fill the place o' those that hae gone. And now, what has auld Thomas to do, but to wait his summons too—patiently to wait, where so many blessings still remain, and joyfully to go where

his greatest treasures have gone before him? But, my bonny young ladies, I maunna' stand here cracking to you any longer: I maun gang to my ain work now."

Mr. and Mrs. Percy joined them at this moment. Mr. Percy had a book in his hand. "Children," said he, "your mamma is afraid you will hurt yourselves, standing out so long in this hot sun; so I have brought the book, with the little story I promised to read to you, and I shall now read it to you in the arbour. We shall all be the better for resting there a short time."

They were quickly seated, and Mr. Percy read as follows:—

THE LITTLE MOUSE.

A TRUE STORY.

"Mary, you little bird," said Mr. Stanley, as he lay back in his easy-chair, stretching his feet upon the fender, "Mary, why are you fluttering and flittering about the room in this manner, and disturbing me at my evening's nap? How now, you little woman,

what are you pulling about those curtains for, and making such a racket?"

"Papa, I am making the room comfortable and tidy, and then your little bird is going to sit on your knee and listen to a story. So do not shake your head, papa, and say, 'No, no;' for I am sure you are not in the least sleepy now, and this is my happy hour, you know. Papa, can you guess what is my other happy hour? It is when I stand behind your chair, at breakfast, and you give me a spoonful of your egg. And can you guess what is my happy corner? It is here," said the little coaxing girl, as she scrambled up on her papa's knee, and looked up, smiling in his face.

"Oh, Mary, Mary!" said Mr. Stanley, (as he gazed on the beaming expression of her large hazel eyes, and parted the glossy ringlets on her brow,) "who can resist you? And so I suppose I have slept quite enough, and must tell you a story. But indeed, Mary, I have exhausted my whole stock; I actually have no more stories to tell."

"Oh, papa! do not say that, it is a cruel

word, and you could make a story, you know; or you can tell me something true, something which happened to you when you were young. I dare say a great many curious things happened to you, papa, when you were young."

"Well," said Mr. Stanley, "let me think for a moment;" and he put his hand to his forehead, while Mary remained perfectly still. "But what little scraping noise is that I hear," said Mr. Stanley, "behind the wainscot? Can it be a mouse?"

"Yes, papa, it is," said Mary; "it is my little mouse. I call it my mouse, for I am trying to tame it. Do you see that little hole? It peeps out there sometimes with its little head; and then I put down crumbs of bread, to try and coax it to come out; but it has never come out but once yet, though I coax it every day."

"Well, Mary," said Mr. Stanley, "your little mouse has recalled to my remembrance an anecdote of a mouse, which, as it is true, and happened to myself, I think will interest you"

"Oh, thank you, dear papa!" said Mary,

as she raised her bright eyes, and fixed them in eager expectation on his face. "And now, papa, begin at the very beginning."

"Well, Mary, at the time I was a young man, pursuing my studies, in chambers in London, I was very fond of drawing; and generally, after breakfast, used to indulge for an hour or two in this interesting occupation. One morning, while thus employed, I chanced to cast my eyes on the carpet. I remember that carpet so well: it was a fawn-coloured ground with little green squares, or compartments, upon it: and one of those green compartments a little mouse had chosen for its breakfast-parlour: there it sat, nibbling some crumbs, which had fallen from a piece of stale bread, which I had been making use of for my drawing. On my making a slight movement, it scampered off, and I saw it enter a little hole, close to the chimney corner. It came, however, next day, and the next, and the next; but just as it was beginning to get more familiar, and to venture a look at me now and then with its quick little twinkling eyes, its nerves were again sadly shaken by an unexpected alarm. My pencil

fell from the table, and rolled upon the floor, and the little mouse, with a squeak of terror, fled to its hole. No doubt it gave its relations an animated description of its wonderful escape, and of the mighty beam of wood, which, falling from the clouds, rolled along the earth, threatening all that lived with instant destruction. Counselled, I suppose, by those cautious friends, it next day did not make its appearance: and I was quite afraid I had lost my little friend for ever. On the following morning, however, I saw its little head peeping from its hole; and on my putting down some crumbs, and keeping perfectly still, it ventured out again, to my great joy, and ate its breakfast with very tolerable appetite. In a few days it became as familiar as ever, indeed even more so; for it was on the fifth morning, I think, that it walked boldly forward and stood at my foot. Now it happened that my shoe that morning did even more than usual credit to Richard's brushing, and to Hunt's blacking: it was shining like a mirror. Oh, oh! thinks I to myself, my little mouse, you are like the rest of the world; you have a seed of vanity

in your composition, and you have mistaken my shoes for a looking-glass; but I did the little mouse a cruel injustice: stepping lightly over my shoe, it run up my leg, jumped on the table, and seated itself close to my paper. It soon became evident to me that this mouse was of a superior order of little beings, and a great admirer of the picturesque. There he sat, in silent admiration of my performance; and day after day was that admiration renewed, and the interest of my occupation increased by the presence of my little visitor. It was my custom to read law—dry, dry law—for some time every morning: but when the sun had reached a certain spot on my green table, the law-book was laid aside, the drawing materials arranged, and the sunny spot was instantly occupied by my little friend. You cannot think how I used to watch for that sunny spot, and that hour of sweet companionship; for our affection seemed mutual, and mousie ate crumbs from my hand, drank water from the cup in which I washed my brushes, and gave many other proofs of silent, confiding attachment.

"The winter passed away; the sweet spring came, with its showers and blossoms; the Easter holidays were approaching, and I began to sigh for rural sights and sounds, and to meditate a trip to the country, to enjoy the fragrance of the lilac and the laburnum, before the first blush of their beauty had passed away. While in this rural mood my friend Frank Churchill came one morning into my room.

"'Charles,' he said, 'I am going to carry you off. You surely do not intend to be contented with London smoke during the Easter holidays? No, no, my good friend; you must be alongside of me, on the top of the mail-coach, by seven o'clock to-morrow morning. My father expects us both to be at Woodlands for the next fortnight. I had a letter from him this morning; he tells me the river never was in finer fishing order.'

"'Frank,' I answered, 'I need no such inducement. I shall be delighted to accompany you: quite de—' delighted, I meant to have added, but mousie rose to my remembrance: I looked at its little hole, and sighed deeply.

"'How now, Charles! what is the matter?' said Frank. 'Oh, I see how it is; there is a dear friend to be left behind! But cheer up, my good fellow; you will see her again in a fortnight.'

"'Nonsense, Frank, nonsense! I shall be quite ready to accompany you.'

"And I was ready. Long before seven, next morning, I was up, and making every possible arrangement that human foresight could devise for the comfort of my little friend during my absence: and having placed on my green table a china bowl of the clearest spring water, a piece of cheese, some bread, a couple of biscuits, and a saucer of oatmeal, I locked the door of my room, put the key in my pocked, and musing and melancholy, descended the stairs.

"'Alas, my little mouse!' I inwardly whispered; 'this will be to you a melancholy day! The sun will cast its warm rays on your favourite spot; you will bask in its bright beams, but you will have no one to bid you welcome! the abundance of the earth will be before you, but you will loathe a solitary meal!'

"The whirl of the mail-coach, however, soon dispelled these sorrowful reflections. As seven o'clock sounded from St. Paul's, my friend Frank Churchill and I were alongside of each other, on the top of the coach; and soon we had left London, with its din and its dust far behind.

"The morning was warm and bright, the sky cloudless, the lark was soaring high, and singing sweetly: village children shouted as the horn sounded cheerily, and we bowled along; village dogs barked at our horses' heels, cocks were crowing, hens were cackling, (glad sounds to a Londoner,) and new laid eggs, with milky tops, rose to the imagination.

"Our journey was delightful; and our welcome at Woodlands no less so. It was, indeed, a fortnight of varied pleasure. We rode, and we fished, and we walked, and we rowed Frank's little sisters on the lake; but still my small friend was not forgotten: and never did I see the large tortoise-shell cat, stretching itself before the fire, that I did not think of my little mouse with feelings of deep interest.

"The fortnight was ended, and Frank in vain urged me to prolong my stay.

"'Oh, I see how it is!' he at last said, 'I remember now; there is a friend in the case —a dear friend, expecting your return! Well, well; I will not urge you further. Only a few questions, Charles: it is but fair you should allow me to ask a few questions. Is she tall?"

"'No, Frank; she is less than you can possibly conceive.'

"'Dark or fair?'

"'Dark.'

"'Only one question more—the colour of her hair?'

"'Brown.'

"'Ah, I thought so; and now I am quite sure! I know your lady; and most intelligent eyes she has.'

"'Remarkably so,' I answered.

"'But yet, Charles, I wonder how you could get acquainted with her! I never could get her to utter a word.'

"'Nor I either,' thought I.

"'Well,' continued Frank, 'it is a good connection: but I am afraid, Charles, she

can have no money. Has she not quantities of brothers and sisters?'

"'Yes, I believe she has,' I answered. And as myriads of little mice rose to my imagination, I laughed outright. Luckily, at that moment the coach which I was expecting came in sight. I took a hasty leave of my friend, and in a moment was on the top, and commencing my journey homewards.

"As we entered London, I was astonished and amused with myself at my anxiety to reach home: I really felt as if I were returning to a dear friend. The coach set me down at the office, and I hastened towards my chambers. Instantly on arriving there, I ran up stairs to my room, and took the key of the door from my pocket.

"'My little mouse,' I said to myself, 'this is not your hour. I shall not see you till to-morrow. But oh, I trust and hope your provisions have not failed.'

"I turned the key in the lock; the door opened: there sat my little mouse, on its accustomed spot! Surprised and delighted, I sprang forward—it did not move! The

cheese, the bread, the water, all stood before it—all, all were untouched! My little mouse had died of a broken heart!"

"Alas! alas!" said Mr. Percy, as he laid the book on the table; "poor little mouse! it is a melancholy business."

"And was it dead—quite dead?" exclaimed Mary, in a sorrowful tone.

"Quite dead, my love: dead as Julius Cæsar."

"Oh, papa! why do you laugh? And we do not know Julius Cæsar: and we are very sorry," continued Mary, "and we do not like sorrowful stories. 'Apple-pie' was sorrowful in the middle, but then it was happy at the end. I wish this had been happy at the end."

"And so do I," said Florence, "I wish little mouse had not died of a broken heart."

"You wish, in short," said Mr. Percy, "that little mouse had feasted on the bread and cheese till it became too jolly a little animal to run into its hole: and so remained stationary, not from affection, but from pure inability to move."

"I do not know about that," said Florence, with a perplexed air, "for I do not understand you, papa; but I think I would have eaten the bread and cheese, and taken a little drop of water."

"Yes," said Mr. Percy, "I can well believe it, Florence. I do not think you would have sat for a fortnight on the top of my green table, with bread and cheese in view, and starve yourself to death."

"No, papa, I would not; but if you had bid me not to touch the bread and cheese, then I should have tried not to touch them—indeed I would, papa; for I always now try not to do what I am forbid. Sometimes I wish very much to do it; and then I *do* do it just a very little. But I am not so bad now, papa, as I was when I did that cruel, cruel thing. Oh, how frightened I was when Sarah said we should have been put in the prison! You will never let us be put in prison, papa? You were very kind to us; and so was mamma. You were not so very angry as Sarah; and you were very kind to us just now, papa, to read that story; only we do not like it so well as 'Apple-pie.'"

"Nor I either," said Mr. Percy. "From the story of 'Apple-pie' there is some instruction to be derived: but this is merely a curious anecdote, and owes its chief interest to its being said to have really happened. Mr. Brooks told me, that the lady at Brighton who related to him this anecdote, assured him that it was a fact. Here, Florence, do you take the book to my room, and lay it on my table. Take care not to touch or disarrange any of my papers, and return here immediately. It is much cooler now, and we shall still have time for a ramble on the hill."

Chapter Tenth.

One morning, when the children were walking out with nurse, and Florence had as usual bounded on before, she met the brewer's cart returning from the house. A pretty little dog ran across the road at that moment, and the wheel passing over it, two of its legs were broken, and it lay as if dead upon the spot.

"You silly beast, you!" said the brewer, "you are good for nothing now, but to be put an end to:" and he lifted a stone as he spoke.

"Oh, do not kill it! do not kill it!" exclaimed Florence, starting forward, and looked up in his face, the tears running down her cheeks. "Do not kill it! Give it to me. I will try to cure its legs. I will be

kind to it, indeed I will: for my mamma has brought me up to be honest and kind to all."

"Heaven help your sweet face!" said the brewer; "you shall have the dog, and welcome; for Bill Benson is not the man to take the life of any poor animal uselessly:" and as he spoke he lifted it gently, and placed it in Florence's apron, which she held up to receive it.

"There, my pretty young lady," he continued; "there, you may try what kindness will do to bring it about again: for though all my life I have maintained that honesty is the best policy, yet I am doubtful of its power to set two broken legs."

Florence seated herself on the grass with her helpless charge, and covered it up with her apron; but its panting and whining increased her distress, and when nurse came up, she was still drowned in tears.

"Oh, do not touch me—do not touch me, nurse!" she exclaimed. "Both legs are broken—both—both!"

"Miss Florence!" screamed the poor woman, almost frantic with terror; "what

has happened? Oh, speak to me—tell me!"

"Yes," said Florence, more calmly; "they are both broken, they are indeed:" and she gently opened her apron.

Nurse, at other times really compassionate to dogs, had nearly thrown this poor animal into the air, so wild with joy was she to find her little miss was safe. What mattered it to her if the dog had two broken legs, if Miss Florence could walk home on both of hers?

And home they went: and Mr. Percy was instantly applied to, to set the broken legs. It was a very nice operation, and nicely performed. Mr. Percy bound up each leg with two small splices of wood; and though it must have put the poor little animal to great pain, yet it licked his hands during the whole time he held it, in token of gratitude.

"This should be a lesson to you, my little girls," said Mr. Percy. "Do you remember, Florence, how you shrank away the other day, and screamed, while I was tying up your finger, which you had cut by touch-

ing my penknife? But," continued Mr. Percy, seeing that the remembrance of past and present afflictions was too much for his Florence, "what name are you to give your little dog?"

Florence twinkled away a tear, and thought for a moment.

"Frisk, papa: I should like it to be called Frisk."

"Well, my child, be it so. I cannot say that at this moment the name is very appropriate; but there is no saying how soon it may be so."

Florence's tender cares for her little favourite were unceasing. Part of her own breakfast and dinner she shared with Frisk: a pretty little basket her mamma had given her, was consigned to his sole use. She spread a piece of flannel in the bottom of it, that he might lie soft and warm; and nurse gave her a handkerchief for a coverlet. Florence had sanguine hopes of Frisk, when once or twice he succeeded in throwing off his coverlet, and looking about him; and her joy was complete, when one day he leapt fairly out and ran by her side. From that

day her attachment to her little dog was unbounded, and they were inseparable companions. Many volumes have been written on the subject of friendship; but surely one other volume, or at least a small appendix should be added, to commemorate the friendship of Florence and Frisk.

Chapter Eleventh.

"MAMMA," said Florence, running into the drawing-room, one forenoon, where Mrs. Percy was reading, "we have a great favour to ask you, if you are not very busy. Will you go into the garden with Mary and me, now? We have a reason, mamma, for asking: we wish to show you a beautiful rose, that has come out on Mary's rose-bush."

"My love," said Mrs. Percy, "I think it is going to rain: we had better delay our walk, till we see how the day is to turn out."

"Oh, no, mamma; I assure you it will not rain. Look at the sky, mamma, it is quite blue."

"Well, Florence," said Mrs. Percy, "I should be sorry to disappoint you unneces-

sarily; and as the garden is not far off, you may go to my room, and bring me my bonnet and shawl. It is your day, is it not?"

"Yes, mamma, it is. It is my day to be your little maid; and I like it so much, so very much, mamma! I like to run off quick, and get you everything you want."

"Yes, Florence. And I am always happy to see you active and obliging; but I should prefer it, were you also to return as quickly as you go; you sometimes keep me waiting an unnecessarily long time."

"Yes, mamma, that is when I cannot find your gloves, and forget in which drawer I have put your shawl; and then I have to pull out each drawer, you know, mamma; and that makes me long. But I shall not be long to-day, for Mary put your things by last night, so I shall find them in a minute, for she always puts them into the same drawer. I know the very corner your shawl will be in, and the gloves will be put beside it; so I shall not be a minute in coming back this time, mamma."

"Well, Florence, and do you not think it would be a right thing for you also to put

them in the same place, and save yourself this trouble and loss of time? How much have I said to you of the careless, disorderly way you have of throwing about your things. You know how seldom your thimble is to be found in your pocket, or your scissors in your bag; you are for ever in search of something that is lost; and you know I never trust you with my pencil, or my fruit-knife, as I do Mary, because I cannot be certain of your returning them. Neither have I the same pleasure in your being my little maid. You are always willing to serve me, no little maid can be more so; but then there is a manner of doing things—a quiet, orderly, gentle manner. Can you tell me, my little girl, why you are always in a bustle?"

"Yes, mamma," said Florence, colouring; "it is because I lose so many of my things."

"And because," said Mr. Percy——

"And because," added Florence, in a low tone, "I put off looking for them at the right moment; and then, when you bid me sit down to my work, and I cannot find my thimble, it makes me bustle. Then nurse scolds me, and says I keep the nursery in a

ferment. I do not know what she means by a ferment; but Mary says she is sure, by nurse's face, it is a wicked thing: and nurse says, too, that she is to try a new plan with us: that she is to look at our drawers every day, and in the baskets you gave us for our night-clothes: and she is to give us orderly tickets and disorderly tickets; and every Saturday we are to show them to you. Do you think, mamma, I shall get many orderly tickets? But I am sure, nurse need not make such a fuss about such little faults."

"My dear Florence," said Mrs. Percy, gravely, "your careless, disorderly habits, and your spirit of delay, are by no means little faults: they are faults which give me many anxious thoughts; and if not corrected, my child, will injure both your own happiness, through life, and the comfort of all around you. You were asking me, the other day, to begin to teach you music, and you seem, also, to have a fondness for drawing. Now, if during another year, I see that you are in the way to cure yourself of those faults, I shall begin to teach you music; and when you have entirely conquered them, you shall

have a drawing-master. I should be very glad that you excelled in both these accomplishments, if more useful things are not neglected; but if your room is to be left in disorder, or your clothes unmended, that the music-lesson may be practised, or the drawing completed, I shall not allow you to go on either with music or drawing."

"Oh, mamma, how sorry I am not to begin music now, for I like it so much! I should like to be able to play like you. And is Mary to begin now, mamma?"

"Yes. If Mary wishes it I shall begin to teach her now."

The tears rose to Florence's eyes. Mary came behind, and whispered in her ear, "Do not cry, Florence; do not. I shall ask mamma to let me wait for you. Mamma," she continued, aloud, "may I wait for Florence? I should not like to begin music till she does."

"Well, my love, be it so. And this kindness on your part will, I hope, be an additional motive for Florence to correct her faults. Will it not, my little girl?" she continued, as she gently drew Florence to-

wards her, and wiped the tears from her eyes. "And now, my little maid, go to my room, and bring me my bonnet, my shawl, and both my gloves."

Mrs. Percy pronounced each word slowly and distinctly, smiling as she spoke. Florence looked up more cheerfully: as she did so, she caught Mary's eye, who whispered something in a low voice; Florence nodded: then, turning to her mamma, with her usually bright look, she said,

"Mamma, we made a little plan this morning: it was about that Mary was whispering."

"You are very fond, Florence, of making plans; but I hope this is one I can approve of."

"Yes, mamma; I think you will say it is a good little plan. It is, mamma, that we are to serve each other. Mary has gone now to put out my bonnet, and everything for me to put on; and to-morrow, when she serves you, I am to be her little maid. Do you think this is a right thing to do, mamma?"

"Yes, my love; I do think it a very right thing. I shall always approve highly of every

thing which tends to make you useful and obliging to others. Now, go and bring me my bonnet and shawl."

"Yes, mamma; and I shall try not to forget anything; and I shall put your clogs at the hall door, that you may just pop your feet into them."

Florence was off in a moment: her little face bright as a sunbeam, and her spirits light as air.

Mrs. Percy cast upon her a look of anxious fondness as she disappeared. It was indeed true, that Florence's careless habits, and constant wish to defer as long as possible what she knew must be done, gave Mrs. Percy much anxiety; for she had, early in life, had a striking picture placed before her of the misery produced by the indulgence of such habits.

Mr. Percy and she were much struck, on their return to England, with the prevailing system of education, which seemed so little calculated to root out that selfishness so strongly engrafted in our nature. It seemed to them that children were now generally the first objects of attention; everything

was to be given up to them: the music and drawing lesson, and the vital importance of French and Italian being spoken in all their purity, were the constant topics of conversation; and the regulation of hours for their various masters was a business before which every other family arrangement must give way. That even a single hour during the day should be dedicated either to making or mending their own clothes, or a few minutes given each morning to arranging their rooms, and leaving them in order, when there were servants to do it for them, would have been deemed a waste of time, of which no conscientious parent could approve.

Mrs. Percy had one day been paying a visit to a former friend, now the mother of a numerous family. Hearing one of the little girls giving an account of how early she had been up, and how busy she had been, she took the child on her knee, saying:

"Now tell me, my love, how your time is employed. Give me a little history of your day. What do you do first in the morning, after you have said your prayers?"

"I dance," said the child; "and when it gets light enough, I practise my music."

"But what do you do before you dance?" inquired Mrs. Percy.

The mamma, who was present, understood the meaning of the question, and answered with a smile:

"Oh, I assure you the things you are thinking of are not forgotten. But we get over all the Bible-work at night, that their heads may be clear for the music in the morning!"*

Mrs. Percy's ideas on the subject of education were different. She was not averse to accomplishments; on the contrary, it was her intention to give her children every advantage in this way which their situation in life entitled them to: but still, accomplishments, with her, were ever kept in the background; and it was their instruction in their duty towards God and towards their neighbour, that was the subject of her daily exertions and fervent prayers. She was constantly stimulating them to think as little of *self* as possible; to be watchful and active,

* A fact.

with regard to the comfort and happiness of others; and grateful for the food, the clothing, the daily care bestowed on them; to look forward anxiously to the time when they should in some degree repay these numerous benefits. It was her intention, when they were of proper age, to give them the management of the house by turns, under the direction of her housekeeper. In short, with every present probability of their being rich, it was Mrs. Percy's wish to educate Mary and Florence as if she had the certainty of their being poor.

It was little at this moment they could do for any one; yet still it was pleasant to see these little girls anxious to do that little:—flying to open the door, or place a chair for their mamma, and constantly on the watch to anticipate their wants or wishes.

Florence now came back with her mamma's bonnet and shawl, followed by her sister; but her bright looks were clouded, and the traces of tears were on her cheek.

"I have brought you your bonnet and shawl, mamma," she said, in a disconsolate tone of voice; "but it is of no use, for nurse

will not give Mary my bonnet or anything; she says it is raining. Nurse is very cross indeed; I am quite sure of that."

"Florence," said Mrs. Percy, looking anxiously at her, "did nurse send the rain? or can she prevent it?"

"No, mamma," said Florence, in a tone so low as scarcely to be heard.

"And what were you wishing yesterday, Florence?" continued Mrs. Percy. "What did I hear you say about your strawberry-bed?"

"I said, mamma, that I wished very much the rain would come, or my strawberry-bed would be quite spoiled; for the plants were little and young, and the leaves were getting dried up, and old Thomas said it was only rain that could save them."

"And how should you feel now, my child?" asked Mrs. Percy.

Florence paused for a moment. "I think, mamma, I know what you mean—I should feel grateful instead of sorry. Well, mamma, I will try to be grateful. Wipe my eyes, please, mamma: and now, if we cannot walk, we might sit round the table, and work at the

baby-caps, and be comfortable; might we not, mamma? But look at the sky! It is quite blue in that little corner." And Florence flew to the window, and gazed up earnestly at the sky. "Look, mamma! do look! I think it is going to be fine yet. What do you think, mamma?"

"I think, my love," said Mrs. Percy, "that it is clouding all over, and will rain heavily; and for the sake of our corn-fields, Florence, as well as your strawberry-bed, I hope it will do so. So let both of us be grateful, my little girl. And I do not see why, as you say, we should not be very comfortable also, sitting around the table at work. Mary and you can take each your little cap and finish it, and I shall try to complete the frock; and then we can carry them to Martha's cottage, the first time we walk out: so that, at all events, the baby, the corn, and the strawberry-bed will be the better for the shower:—eh, Florence?"

"Oh, mamma! you have such a nice way of comforting me; nurse says you understand best how to manage me. But do you think,

mamma, I should be able to get over my two faults, and begin my music?"

"Your *two* faults, Florence?"

"No, no, mamma, I do not mean *that:* I do not mean that I have only two. I know very well,"—and Florence coloured with ingenuous shame,—"but I mean the two that I am to cure before I begin my music. I dare say I shall get over them very quickly, mamma. You know it is just to do everything in a minute, and to fold up my tippet. Did your mamma teach you not to put off doing things, and to be orderly? Did she try to cure you of your little faults?"

"My love," said Mrs. Percy, "my mamma did not consider them little faults; and she took infinite pains to teach me the importance of doing everything at the proper moment, and of being orderly and active, and giving all the assistance I could to others; and besides the benefit of her excellent advice, I had a striking example, from a companion of my own age, of the misery produced by the indulgence of those very faults which I am at present so anxious to correct in you."

"Oh, mamma! do tell us about that!" exclaimed Florence. "Did you know a disorderly little girl when you were a child?"

"Yes, my love," said Mrs. Percy; "I knew a little girl, who, by the indulgence of those very faults which you now think trifling, nearly lost her life, and gave the greatest distress to a most affectionate parent. I used often to go and spend a day with my friend Emma, and was much attached to her, for she was lively and sweet tempered, and might easily have been induced to be useful and obliging to others, had she been instructed to be so. But she had the misfortune to lose her mamma at an early age; her father was much engaged in business, and Emma's education was entirely committed to the care of a governess, who, though very accomplished, and also a kind-hearted woman, was far from being a sensible one. Emma's papa was fond both of music and dancing; and her governess thought his domestic happiness would be sufficiently secured by his daughter's possessing both these accomplishments in perfection. But

even this object was not to be obtained by crossing her inclinations, or tying her down to regular hours. Emma, she said, had a natural taste both for music and drawing, and there was little doubt that she would excel in both. So, though Miss Morley was often heard to say, 'Leave these things, Miss Emma; there is no need you should waste your time in putting them in order, when a servant can do it for you; you had much better go and practise your music;' yet, if Emma preferred a walk, or a game of battledore-and-shuttlecock, assuring her governess that she should have plenty of time before dinner for all her lessons, the point was immediately given up; and, in consequence, half she ought to have done was left unfinished. That she should work neatly with her needle was not esteemed a matter of any consequence: and if at any time she was desired to mend her frock, or any other article of dress, which she had torn from great carelessness, it was so long before a needle or thread could be produced, or her thimble found, (for Emma wore no pockets,) that Miss Morley generally discovered that the

easiest and quickest method was to do the work herself.

"Emma's father was so much out, as to be very little aware of what was going on: but when frequently absent from home for a few days, he was surprised and displeased that she seldom or never answered his letters by return of post, as he always desired she should do; and that when she did write, the questions he had asked were generally either not attended to at all, or answered in a short, unsatisfactory manner. He had given her a rule that, except with regard to letters of mere amusement, she should never delay, without good reason, a single post in answering; and, with the letter received before her, replying to every question in the order in which it was asked. But how could Emma do this, when she generally delayed from day to day, wrote at last in a violent hurry, and found, when she did so, that the letter to be answered was either mislaid or locked up in a drawer, of which she had lost the key?

"But, my dear children," continued Mrs. Percy, "I fear you cannot understand all I have been saying to you; and what remains

of Emma's history is still more difficult to be understood by you. I have been led on by my own interest in this subject."

"Oh, mamma!" exclaimed both the little girls, "indeed we are interested very much. Pray, pray go on!"

"And, mamma," continued Florence, "we do understand about Emma; and when you go away, and write us a letter, we will not put off writing, but send off a post that very day. And you will ask us questions, and we shall answer them one after another:—shall we not, Mary?"

"Well, my dear children," said Mrs. Percy, "I shall continue. But as I am now going to tell you what happened when Emma grew up to be a young lady, it will be more difficult for you to follow it, though I shall make it as plain to you as I can.

"When Emma was eighteen, her governess left her; and her papa said, now that her education was finished, he expected her to take charge of the house, and save him the expense of a housekeeper, which he could very ill afford, for he had been unfortunate in business, and had lost a great deal

of money. But, alas! such were Emma's habits, that before the end of the first week, everything was in confusion. Dinner was never served at the stated time, for Miss Emma was so often either out walking or only beginning to dress, when it was placed on the table, that the cook, provoked at everything being spoilt and cold, soon became as careless and irregular as her mistress. Her papa spoke to her in vain on the subject; and finding that she did not amend, and that from her disorderly habits and spirit of delay, everything in the house was getting daily more and more confused, he began frequently to dine at a coffee-house in the city, in preference to returning to his uncomfortable home. Emma grieved at this, for she sincerely loved her father: and when in the evening, frequently harassed and worn out, he did return, she would fly and welcome him with smiles, assure him he should have tea in a moment to refresh him, and they should enjoy together a comfortable evening. But, alas! when the urn was brought, the key of the tea-chest was constantly missing; and before it could be

hunted for above and below stairs, and found at last under the hearth-rug, or in some odd corner. the water had ceased to boil, her papa had become angry with her, and the evening, which had begun with smiles, generally ended in tears.

"Emma was not aware how often and how mournfully her papa contrasted the present with former hours of happiness; when, after the fatigues and labours of the day, the bright fire, the nicely arranged room, and the happy looks of his affectionate wife, were his smiling reception. When did he ever return during the day, and find her absent; or in a winter evening, find the hearth unswept, his chair not turned towards the fire, or everything around that did not bespeak eager expectation and delighted welcome? Then those sweet hours which generally closed their evening, when he would read to her aloud, and she would sit at work beside him, so quiet, so still, almost afraid to breathe, lest she should lose the deep interest which hung upon his words! Now that Emma's education was finished, he had hoped that happiness such as this would

have been, in some degree, restored to him He had tried to read to her also; but her eyes were for ever wandering round the room in search of something necessary for her work, or she was called out to give some order to a servant, which had been neglected in the morning; and before she could resume her seat, the interest of the subject was broken, and the book thrown aside. In this state of things passed the first year, when her papa was obliged to go to Bristol for a few days on business, and my mother allowed me to visit Emma during his absence, as we were such near neighbours that she could be with us herself daily.

"The second morning after my arrival, the curate, who resided at a village some miles off, called. He was a pious, gentle, amiable man, and Emma was much attached to him. His eldest daughter, who was just her own age, was in very bad health; and Emma often joined her papa in regretting, that from Mr. Benson's having a large family, and being very poor, he was not able to give his sick daughter many necessary comforts, or to remove her to the warmer climate of

Devonshire, for the winter, which had been prescribed for her by the physicians. When he came into the room, he expressed great disappointment at finding Emma's father gone from home for a few days; for he said he had called to entreat him to write instantly in his favour to his friend Lord B——; as the living in Devonshire, to which he had always looked forward, had suddenly become vacant by the death of the rector. You cannot understand this, my dear children, and I can only explain it to you by saying, that this clergyman in Devonshire had more money given him and a better house than Mr. Benson; and that now that he was dead, Lord B—— might put Mr. Benson into his situation, if he chose it. Do you think you understand this?"

"Yes, yes, mamma, we do; and we like this story very much!" they both exclaimed. "And," continued Mary, "if Mr. Benson went to Devonshire, his sick daughter would be warmer; would she not, mamma?"

"Yes, my love," said Mrs. Percy; "and this was one of the strongest reasons for Mr. Benson wishing to obtain this situation, and

so he told Emma. 'But,' continued he, 'if one single post is delayed, if the letter is not sent off this very day, some other person will apply, and the living will be given away. There is no time to write to your father on the subject. Do you think, my dear Miss Emma,' and he hesitated, 'do you think you could write a few lines to Lord B——? Could you apply yourself to your godfather in my favour?'

"'Willingly,' said Emma. 'How can you suppose I would not do so? I shall be delighted to write.'

"'Well then,' said Mr. Benson, 'I shall mark down on a slip of paper what I wish you to say in the first place, and then you can add what you like yourself.' He wrote a few lines with his pencil; then giving her the slip of paper, and again gratefully thanking her for her kindness, he left the room. When he was gone, Emma resumed her employment of filling a vase with flowers, which his visit had interrupted. As she was placing in it the last rose, I said:

"'You will write, Emma, instantly, will you not?'

"'Yes,' she said, 'I shall certainly write; but why instantly, Mary? that is so like you. You are always for doing things at the very moment. Why it is very little past eleven o'clock now, and the boy does not call for the letter-bag till two. I have nearly three hours before me; and you know I promised to be at Viewfield this morning by twelve, to see Jane's carpet work, before she sent it off to London. But I shall write the very moment I return; I promise you that: so do not look so grave, Mary.'

"'Oh, Emma!' I said, with much earnestness, 'do write now, I entreat you. Only consider of what importance it is to Mr. Benson that your letter should go by this day's post. If you delay, the living may be given away to another, and you cannot know what may prevent your return from Viewfield.'

"'How unreasonable you are, Mary!' she answered. 'What can prevent my return? Do you think I am not as anxious to oblige Mr. Benson as you can be? but you must leave me to do so at my own time. You must not preach to me;' and with a height-

ened colour she left the room: in the next moment she had left the house. When more than an hour had passed, feeling very anxious, I seated myself at the window to watch her return; but time flew on, and still she did not appear. In vain I looked in the direction of Viewfield; there was no trace of Emma to be seen. At last, I thought I could discover some object at a distance, and I threw open the window that I might see more clearly. The sound of a horse's hoof was heard, and the little boy with the letter-bag came cantering towards the house on his little pony; and, alas! there was still no Emma. I flew down to the hall-door, and entreated him to wait. I told him it was for a letter of the greatest consequence, and that Miss Emma would be back immediately, and could write it in a few minutes.'

"'Oh, miss! if it is for Miss Emma's letter, it is needless to wait: she never comes back when she promises; all the servants in the house can tell you that: and I have many letters to call for yet at other places. I must be off; indeed, miss, I must;' and cracking his little whip, and looking most important,

he was out of sight in a moment. I was in a sad state of distress; but I knew that the post did not go off till three, and that by sending a servant across the fields with the letter, it might still be in time. I did all I could to prevent further loss of time. I placed a sheet of paper and an inkstand on the table: I mended a pen, and prepared a taper and sealing-wax, and again placed myself at the window, anxiously to wait the result. In a short time I saw Emma flying towards the house, her face like crimson, and in breathless agitation. 'Oh, I am late!' she exclaimed, as she entered the room: 'I am very late, I fear! Is the boy gone? Was it him that I saw from the top of the hill? Oh, do tell me, Mary!'

"'Yes, Emma,' I answered, 'the boy is gone. I could not prevail on him to stay.' (She covered her face with her hands.) I continued: 'Do not distress yourself so much, Emma. Write now! write instantly! We can send a servant with your letter across the field.'

"'A servant!' she exclaimed: 'Oh, no, no! I shall not trust it to any one. I will

take it myself: I will run every foot of the way.' She advanced towards the table. 'Thank you,' she said with one of her sweetest smiles, (as she drew the paper towards her.) 'Thank you, dear Mary: you are always kind. But, oh!' she continued, pressing her forehead, 'my poor head, how it aches! How shall I be able to write this letter! I have no time to think now of what I should say.

"'The paper, Emma,' I said hastily; 'it will tell you what you should say. You have to copy it first you know.'

"'The paper!' she repeated, and grew extremely pale. 'Oh Mary! I have no idea where I put it. I have lost it, I fear.' Instantly we began to search through every corner of the room, but it was nowhere to be found.

"'Compose yourself, dear Emma,' I said; 'do compose yourself, and try to think where you put it. I am sure I saw it in your hand, when you went towards the table in the window.'

"'You are quite right!' she exclaimed, joyfully. 'I remember now quite well what I

did with it: I locked it in my work-box, that it might be safe. Hand me that bag. Quick! quick! Mary.' But, alas! when did Emma ever find a key where she thought she had put it? Above stairs and below she hunted for this key. Every servant in the house was called to assist in the search; and the key was at last found in the band-box, from which Emma had taken her bonnet. The letter was now written, signed, and sealed. It was a warm day in July: Emma, already fatigued with the haste she had made to reach the house, looked extremely flushed, and I again urged her to let a servant take her letter, or to entrust it to me; but she would not listen—she was out of the house, and running at full speed before I had finished the sentence. By the fields the road was greatly shorter, and Emma made such haste, that when at a short distance from the desired spot, she could plainly see the mail-coach still standing before the door of the post-office. She redoubled her efforts. Alas! the horn sounded, the horses started off;—in vain my poor Emma held up the letter, and shouted to the guard to stop. No

one observed her: the coach was out of sight in a moment. Arrived at the door, she threw her letter into the letter-box, and sitting down by the side of the road, burst into tears. The moment I saw her enter the house again I knew all that had happened; and by next morning she was so seriously unwell that I sent for my mother. The apothecary seemed to fear she was taking a fever, and advised that her father should be sent for. On the fourth day the answer from Lord B—— was received, and the letter anxiously opened by Emma, who, though in bed, and extremely ill, insisted on knowing its contents. Lord B—— wrote with much kindness:—nothing would have given him greater pleasure, he said, than to have attended to her wishes, with regard to Mr. Benson, had he received her letter a single day sooner; but another person, also of great worth, had applied the day before, and he had promised him the living. In the evening of that sorrowful day, Emma's father arrived from Bristol, but she did not know him. By that time she had become insensible: she seemed to get worse every hour,

and for many days there was little or no hope of her recovery. Mr. Benson, informed of all that had happened, was unceasing in his visits; and many an hour did he pass in the sick room, and often did he kneel with her poor father by her bed-side, and pray for resignation to the Divine will. It was on the tenth day of her illness, I think, that when we were all kneeling round her bed, and Mr. Benson was praying aloud, Emma opened her eyes, looked at him for a moment with an eager, doubtful expression, then closing them again, as a faint smile passed across her face, lay perfectly still, and in a few minutes seemed in a quiet sleep. It was the first time she had slept quietly since her illness, and she continued to do so for some hours. Her father, after watching long by her, left the room to give vent to his joy and thankfulness. Soon after she awoke, and beckoning me towards her, said, 'Mary, I have had a sweet dream. I dreamed that Mr. Benson was kneeling by my bed-side, with my dear father, and that he prayed over me, and blessed me: he had quite, quite forgiven me.'

"Gently, and by degrees, I told her it was no dream. I spoke to her of his daily visits, of his ardent prayers; and though agitated, and at first much affected, a heavy weight seemed taken from her mind; and from that moment all danger appeared to have passed away.

"Many were the good resolutions she made, during her recovery, to correct those faults, which had produced such fatal consequences; and fervently did she thank God for having spared her to prove the sincerity of her repentance.

"I have only now to tell you, my dear children, that in a few months Emma became a different being. She was the joy and comfort of her father's life."

"Oh, mamma!" exclaimed both the little girls, "what an interesting story! But we should like to hear more about it. What became of Mr. Benson? and did his daughter get well again?"

"Yes, my dears, she did get well. It was Emma's delight to procure her many little comforts; all her pocket money was spent for this purpose: and in the following year

a distant relation of Mr. Benson's died, and unexpectedly left him such a sum of money as enabled him to give his family every advantage."

"How glad I am!" said Florence: "how very glad I am he got more money, and that his daughter got well! And, mamma," she continued, putting her arms round Mrs. Percy's neck, and whispering in her ear, "I shall try to cure myself of my two faults; indeed I shall, mamma: and I will never call them little faults any more."

Chapter Twelfth.

Several months passed away; but they did not pass idly. Both the little girls could now read as well as Lucy Fraser, and perhaps better: but though various books were given them, no stories interested them so much as those interesting histories which they read with their mamma in the Bible, and which she talked over with them after they were in bed at night. They got by heart, besides, a small portion of the Psalms and a couple of verses from the Gospels every morning; so that they were rapidly acquiring a considerable knowledge of Scripture. They were no longer told as formerly, before their mamma's arrival, that they must be humble and gentle, and refrain from angry words, or no one would admire and love

them; but they were told, that their blessed Saviour "was meek and lowly of heart;" and that he hath said "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall see God." In all things His all-perfect example was held up to them as that which they should be constantly striving to follow; and they were instructed daily to pray for the assistance of the Holy Spirit to enable them to do so. Meanwhile, accomplishments, both useful and ornamental, were not forgotten. Their papa gave them instructions in writing and arithmetic; their mamma, in geography and French; and a master came twice a week from Worcester, to give them lessons in dancing: and during the other days, they generally practised their steps in the garden, for old Thomas's amusement, who no longer complained that too much time was given to useless accomplishments, when he found that things of infinitely more importance were not forgotten.

It was now winter: and Christmas-day, so long wished for, so eagerly expected, came at last. In the morning of that day, Mr. and Mrs. Percy were awakened by sounds

of the sweetest nature, and these beautiful words of the Christmas hymn were sung behind their door by the soft, youthful voices of their children :

"While shepherds watched their flocks by night,
All seated on the ground,
The angel of the Lord appeared,
And glory shone around."

The song ceased, and the next moment they were fondly pressed to their father's heart.

"God bless and preserve my dear children," he said; "and may this blessed day ever bring to your minds tidings of great joy." And as he spoke, he took two small Bibles and prayer-books from below his pillow, and gave to each. "And who taught you this beautiful hymn?" said Mr. Percy.

"It was nurse, papa," they answered; "she said you would like to hear it."

"Nurse was quite right, my dear children: no other music could have sounded half so sweet in our ears."

"Now," said their mamma, after she too had blessed them, "look about the room,

and see if you can discover any other Christmas gifts that are meant for you."

The children's quick eyes instantly fell on two pretty little tables that stood at the foot of the bed, each covered with a white napkin.

"Yes, you are quite right," said their mamma: "these little tables, with all they contain, are for you." They ran towards them.

"Stop," said Florence, "stop, Mary; let us make a longer pleasure; let us guess first. What can it be? It cannot be a doll, or a doll's bed, for we have that already; or books —no, for papa has given us books. I must feel. Oh, Mary, there are two things: something hard and something soft; I am quite sure of that! What can the hard thing be? How delightful, if it were just what we were wishing for; if it were a work-box, Mary! But I have not a bit more patience; I am going to look now—I am going to lift the cover!"

Both napkins were quickly raised, and Florence's brightest visions were realized. There stood two beautiful work-boxes, with

needle-case, scissors, bodkin, thimble, winders, cotton-balls, and everything complete. And beside each box was placed a basket, filled with pieces of long-cloth and coarser stuffs, such as village children wear.

"You see there," said Mrs. Percy, "everything that is required for little work-women. And as you really now can work very nicely, I wish you henceforward to employ one hour of each day in working for the poor. This need not prevent you afterwards from doing more in this way; but even this short period will, in time, prove no inconsiderable amount of hours, which it will one day be pleasant to look back upon."

The children found that in each basket there were paper patterns, which their mamma had cut out for them, of everything which a baby should wear: and by degrees they learnt to cut out very nicely by those patterns. And as Mr. Percy generally read aloud to them in the evenings, while their mamma was assisting them in their work, the hour thus spent was not only esteemed the happiest, but the most useful in the whole day. And many comfortably clothed

little babies would have said so too, if they could have spoken.

But if the winter evenings were given to the comfort of the babies, the mornings proved no less beneficial to other little creatures. The snow was cleared away from the window-sill in the nursery regularly every morning; and many a robin-red-breast partook of the children's breakfast. Mary would steal along the floor, to watch their arrival, and put up her sweet face so softly, that if they did see her it was impossible that even little birds could be frightened by anything so gentle. But Florence would scatter them all into the air again, by her own rapid flight across the room; and then she would indignantly exclaim, "You little silly creatures, you; how can you be so ungrateful! Do you not know that I give you the crumbs from my own breakfast; and do you not know that I am Florence?"

Time passed on. There was no longer any snow to clear away, and the robins no longer came to be fed; but other pleasures succeeded. The snowdrops and the hepaticas were blooming in the children's gardens,

and every day now they were putting in seeds, and preparing for the beauty of summer. One morning, as old Thomas stood over them, directing their labours, the garden door was hastily opened, and a boy, apparently in great agitation, ran in, exclaiming—

"Oh, grandfather, come quick! Mother has scalded Billy's foot with boiling water, and it is very bad!"

"What was it," exclaimed Mary, "that mamma said the other day, about curing a burn with cotton? What was it, Florence?"

Florence could not remember. She had, all the time her mamma was speaking, been counting how many times she could hop round the room on one foot; and now she had no cure to suggest for the little boy.

"Oh, I remember now!" said Mary; "and it must be put on instantly. Do not shut the door, Thomas: let me pass."

She darted off, and in a few minutes reached the drawing-room. Quite out of breath, she exclaimed,

"Oh, mamma, come quick, with some cotton for Billy's foot: it is scalded with boil

ing water. He is very ill, and crying with the pain. Do come, mamma, and take it away."

"Willingly would I do so, my dear child," said Mrs. Percy; "but, alas! the very last piece of wadding was taken yesterday to finish your papa's dressing-gown. What can be done? For there is no more to be got in the village."

"I know," said Mary, "I know!"

She flew to the nursery, took the scissors from her work-box, and hastily ripping up the bolster and pillow of her doll's bed, returned the next moment with the cotton in her hand. Mrs. Percy proceeded immediately, followed by both the little girls, to Thomas's cottage. The mother sat holding the child in her lap, who was screaming himself almost into fits with the violence of the pain.

"Oh, madam," she said, "my poor, poor Billy! I fear I have lamed him for life; and I could not get the stocking off his dear little foot, without bringing the skin with it. Oh, it is a sight that will make your heart sore to look at."

The poor little boy's foot was indeed in

a sad condition: but Mrs. Percy, with the greatest gentleness, put the cotton all round it, and sewed it on like a little boot; she then gave the child ten drops of laudanum, and assured his mother that very soon the pain would entirely cease. In less than a quarter of an hour he looked up smiling in Mrs. Percy's face, and said, "Good lady; nice, nice cotton on Billy's foot." His little eyes then became heavy, and he dropped asleep on his mother's lap.

"Now," said Mrs. Percy, as she rose to leave the cottage, "the cotton must not be removed till the foot is well; but as fresh cotton may be required, I shall send to Worcester for it. Had the skin not been broken, and the cotton instantly applied, it would not even have blistered. You must remember this again, for it is equally efficacious for every sort of burn.

"Mamma," said Florence, as they were returning, "I will not hop round the room on one foot the next time you are telling a useful thing, but will try to listen like Mary. And I will give my bolster and pillow too, for the little boy's foot: and I hope the

wadding will not come soon from Worcester. But, mamma, will you tell me why cotton cures a burn?"

"Indeed," said Mrs. Percy, "I cannot tell you. In Scotland it is now a mode of treatment in general use; but how it acts has not yet been accounted for. I can, however, tell you how it is said to have been discovered. At the time of the sugar-boiling, in the West Indies, a negro slave was dreadfully scalded: while some of the others ran off to procure assistance, they threw the poor suffering creature down on a quantity of cotton which happened to be near; and when her wounds came to be dressed, the surgeon was surprised to find that the skin, on those parts which had touched the cotton, had not risen at all, while all the other parts of her body were blistered."

"Well, mamma," said Florence, "I shall remember all you have told me now; and whenever I am burned I shall lie down on the cotton, the moment you desire me."

"I would rather, my dear Florence," said Mrs. Percy, "that it were not necessary for you to give me this particular proof of your

obedience; but next winter I hope you will cure yourself of that bad habit of running to the fire, when you are cold. Do you remember how often I used to tell you that your frock was in danger of catching fire, and that I wished you to make it a rule, never to put your foot at all on the hearth-rug? If poor little Billy had not been too near the fire, his foot could not have been scalded by his mother's oversetting the pan of boiling water on it."

Florence listened, and promised; but Florence's good resolutions too often melted away, like morning dew.

For some time the children accompanied their mamma every day to Thomas's cottage. The little boy's foot got rapidly better; but his mother still kept him in bed, as the only means of preventing him from using it too soon; for he was a child of three years old, and little men of that age are not fond of a sedentary life. She was also glad to have him so safely disposed of, for she had a little baby besides of nine months' old, to take charge of, and this fully occupied her time.

The baby was a beautiful flourishing little

creature, and a great delight to Mary and Florence. They had, besides, another interest in their visits to the cottage: Thomas's eldest grandchild, Betsy, a little girl of nine years old, they found constantly employed in working lace on a cushion with bobbins; and both the little girls used to watch her proceedings with great attention. Her bobbins moved so very quickly, that at first all appeared to them to be confusion: but she was a good-natured little girl: she did it slowly to show them the method, and then she offered to teach them how to do it themselves. One morning, while they were occupied in this way, they suddenly heard a scream from Betsy's mother, and on looking up, they saw the baby in her arms in a convulsive fit. Mrs. Percy immediately flew to a corner of the room where its little washing-tub stood; and having poured some warm water into it, she plunged the baby, without waiting to undress it, up to its neck in the water. In a few minutes its little features again became composed; it knew its mother, smiled, and held out its little arms to her.

Mrs. Percy did not leave the cottage till

she saw it undressed, rubbed with flannel, and put into a warm bed. It seemed quite to have recovered; yet she still felt very anxious about it, and she gave the mother many instructions as to what was to be done, should the fits recur.

Next day Mary and Florence were most impatient to get to the cottage, to inquire for their little favourite; and Mrs. Percy seemed no less anxious. Alas! the first glance realized their worst fears.

The baby lay like a bruised lily on its mother's lap, and death was in its heavy eye. It had been seized early in the morning with another fit, and one of longer duration; and it seemed now to be in a state of insensibility. The mother sat gazing upon it, in deep and quiet sorrow: "He is passing from me," she said, in a low, suppressed tone. "He soon will sleep, to wake in his Saviour's bosom." As she spoke, the baby made a slight movement; a ray of intelligence seemed to light up its face for a moment; it stretched out its little arms, as if to embrace its mother, then all became still—it ceased to breathe.

No word was spoken. Mary and Florence stood gazing in silent emotion: then running towards their mamma, they hid their faces in her lap, and sobbed aloud.

"They weep for my little one," said the poor mother, "and I can give him no tear."

Mrs. Percy rose, and having gently taken the body of the infant from her, she laid it on the bed, and beckoned to little Billy to approach. The child nestled into its mother's bosom: her long-suppressed emotion gave way; she embraced him fondly, and her tears fell fast on his little face.

"These are salutary tears," said Mrs. Percy, "and every day they will become sweeter. You have prayed for your baby's eternal happiness, and that happiness is now secured: it is gone where sin can never reach; where sorrow is unknown; it is a partaker of its Saviour's blessedness, without having shared His bitter cup.

As Mrs. Percy spoke, she saw from the window Thomas approaching, with his son-in-law; and feeling that the family would be better alone at such a moment, she took

the little girls by the hand, and left the cottage.

"Mary," said Mrs. Percy next morning, as she rose from the breakfast-table, "what are you thinking of? you look as if you wanted to ask me a question."

"Mamma, it is about the little baby. I was thinking of the little baby. Is he put into the ground yet, mamma."

"No, my love."

"Is he still lying on the bed where you put him?"

"Probably he is, my love."

"And would it frighten us to see him again."

"Frighten you, Mary! Why should it?"

"I do not know, mamma; but Lucy said it would; and Florence says she should not like to go now. But last night we spoke about the little baby in our beds; and then we said we should ask you to take us to see him again this morning. Lucy did not tell us till we were at breakfast."

"My dear children," said Mrs. Percy, "I am extremely sorry to hear Lucy spoke to you in so ignorant and foolish a manner. But

you know, poor Lucy is an orphan: she has had no kind parents to give her instruction; and it was in the hope of being of use to her, and in some degree supplying a mother's place, that I removed her, on my return to this country, from the school where she had been placed. Do you think, Mary, that Lucy would be afraid to look at Florence or you while you were asleep?"

"Oh, no, mamma! she often watches us while we sleep."

"Well, my love, this baby's body is, as it were, asleep, while its soul is in heaven, already enjoying that perfect happiness which it is our daily prayer that we should all attain. Is there anything frightful in this, my dear children?"

"Oh, no, mamma!" exclaimed both the little girls. "And we should like to go to the cottage now, if you would go with us."

"Certainly, my dears, I shall accompany you. I had before intended going this morning, and taking you with me. I wished to say a word or two to the poor mother; and I thought it would gratify her, were you to gather a few flowers from your own little

gardens to strew over her baby's bed: so go to Lucy, and tell her to put on your bonnets, and to get ready to go with us. She shall not be asked to go into the cottage, unless she wishes it herself; but I have no doubt she will wish to do so, when I have talked to her on the subject: and do you bring your little baskets, and join me in the garden."

The little girls ran off to obey their mamma's command, and, accompanied by Lucy, they soon rejoined her; and the sweetest flowers they had to bestow being quickly gathered, they all proceeded together towards the cottage.

It was one of the loveliest mornings of summer; the dew-dops were still glistening on the trees, and a pale silvery mist was rolling back, like a curtain, from the green hill-side, and giving, each moment, some new point of beauty to the sight. Mrs. Percy made Lucy remark the varied scene around, and cast her eyes over the rich and luxuriant plain.

"It is a fair and beautiful world," she said; "but what is it in comparison of those glories which shall be revealed, and

which now are revealed to that little one, whose lifeless clay we are about to visit? It is a sweet sight, Lucy, to see the body laid in its last and long repose, when we can, with faith and hope, look forward to meeting its better part again in the presence of our Redeemer. The soul of that little baby is now with its God, rejoicing in realms of everlasting day. For it there is no more sorrow, no more sin; it is washed in its Saviour's blood, and clothed in His righteousness. It may well be an object of deep interest and desire to look upon, but can never be one of terror; for it has already attained that salvation which we yet must work out with fear and trembling, and which we can only attain by faith in our Lord Jesus Christ."

"But if we do a great many good things, mamma," said Florence, "are we not quite sure of going to heaven?"

"My dear Florence, there are no good works which we can do which can merit everlasting happiness. We have sinful natures, and must ever be found unworthy in the sight of a pure God and a righteous

Judge. If we were to bear the burden of our own sins, it would indeed be a burden too heavy for us. Do you not remember, Florence, what I told you on this subject? Do you not remember those beautiful verses in Isaiah, which both Mary and you learned by heart?

"'But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.

"'All we like sheep have gone astray: we have turned, every one, to his own way, and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.'

"Who is it, my dear children, who is spoken of in those verses?"

"Jesus Christ, mamma."

"Yes, my dears; it is Jesus Christ who took the burdens of our sins upon Himself, and suffered a cruel death, that we might be forgiven. It is only by believing in Him, and loving Him, that we can be saved: we shall then, for the sake of His righteousness, be freely pardoned. But if we really believe in Him, and really love Him, we shall

in everything try to resemble Him; we shall constantly pray for the assistance of the Holy Ghost in our hearts, to enable us to be as meek, as lowly, and as forgiving as He was; we shall be as anxious to do everything that is good, as if we had no Saviour who died for us: yet we shall have as entire a trust of receiving pardon through Him only, as if we did nothing of ourselves."

In this manner Mrs. Percy continued to talk to the little girls, and ended by cautioning Lucy against giving impressions of terror to her children on any subject whatever. They had now reached the cottage, the window of which was partly open; and as Mrs. Percy held back the flowering honeysuckle which fringed the little casement, she stood for a moment to contemplate the scene within. The baby's bed was exactly opposite to the window; at the foot of it lay little Billy, in a sweet and refreshing sleep; a profusion of fair glossy curls partly shading his face, and the bloom upon his cheek in striking contrast with the alabaster hue of his little brother's; but the baby was still beautiful in death; its white, dimpled arms

were crossed upon its little breast, and the smile, which yet lingered on its lips, seemed as a sweet token of the happiness the soul was enjoying. The mother and her eldest girl was kneeling by the bed; but there was an expression of anguish on the countenance of the former, which it pained Mrs. Percy to see. Taking Mary and Florence by the hand, she was about to enter the cottage, when she caught an imploring look from Lucy.

"Yes, Lucy, you may accompany us," said Mrs. Percy; and the next moment they all stood within the threshold.

"Do not let us disturb you at such a moment," said Mrs. Percy, in a gentle voice, as she advanced towards the bed.

"Oh, that I could pray as I ought—that I could be more completely resigned!" said the poor mourner. "Oh, my kind lady, pray for me!"

Mrs. Percy, whispering to the children and Lucy to kneel beside her, sank upon her knees, and raising her eyes to heaven, she poured forth the following prayer:—

"O Father of spirits, and Lord of life!

we should bow down before thee, and say, with the deepest humility and the most entire resignation, 'It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good.' He has taken from us this pleasant plant: he has withered this fair blossom; he has wounded, but he can heal; he has laid low, but he can raise again; he is the resurrection and the life, Lord God over all, blessed for ever. O Heavenly Father, enable this thy afflicted servant, even while yet gazing on this lovely, lifeless clay, to say from the heart, 'Thy will be done.' Enable her to raise her eyes from this scene of sorrow, from this bed of death, to those blessed mansions were sorrow shall be no more, and where death is swallowed up in victory. Oh! may she, and all of us, be enabled to read in this dispensation the lesson of a loving Father, who would say unto us, 'This is not the place of your rest: here you have no abiding city.' Search our hearts, O God, and make us to know our exceeding sinfulness, and bring us to that Saviour, who alone had a price sufficient to pay, a power sufficient to redeem us. Watch over these little ones now

kneeling at thy footstool, and may their imperfect praise find acceptance with thee. Be to them as the good shepherd; feed them in green pastures, and lead them forth beside the waters of comfort: and should their days also be few in this world, may they gently pass from our eartly love to the bosom of their Saviour; and may we, after the sorrows and struggles of this life, be united to them in the mansions of the blessed, and obtain that crown of righteousness which thou hast promised to those who seek for glory, honour, and immortality, through the merits of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour. Amen."

"Amen," responded the mother, as she rose from her knees: and bending over her infant, imprinted a fond kiss on its pale brow.

"Amen, my dear one! Let your father come; I can part with you now. Yes, you will soon be shut out from my sight; but that we may meet again in a land of glory shall be my daily prayer. Blessings on you," she continued, turning to Mary and Florence, who were strewing the fresh flowers they had brought with them on the bed. "Oh,

blessings on you, for your kind thought for my darling!"

Mrs. Percy, after conversing for some time longer, rose to go, desiring Mary and Florence to accompany her. Mary lingered for a moment as she passed the bed, and gazed earnestly on the infant: then stooping forward she kissed its cheek, and softly whispering, "Good-bye, little baby, till we meet in heaven," followed her mamma.

Chapter Thirteenth.

This event made a deep impression on Mary and Florence. Their mamma had often talked to them of the uncertainty of life, and she now taught them to say by heart these beautiful verses of the 103d Psalm:

"As for man, his days are as grass: as a flower of the field, so he flourisheth.

"For the wind passeth over it, and it is gone; and the place thereof shall know it no more.

"But the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children's children."

These words were not merely learned by rote, they were deeply impressed upon their hearts, with the memory of their first sorrow:

but alas! more sorrowful days were at hand.

I have already said that Florence was strongly inclined to be disobedient; and the time had now come when she, poor child, was doomed to weep bitterly for that disobedience.

One beautiful summer evening in July, Mrs. Percy allowed the two little girls to accompany nurse on a visit to Anna Rowly's sick mother, who lived in a small solitary cottage, near the foot of the hill, a little way from the village of Malvern. There were honeysuckles trained on the walls of this cottage, and some pretty rose-bushes, that Anna had planted in a little flower-border in front of the house. As they were about to enter, Florence cast her eye on a beautiful branch of roses, and stooped forward to pluck it.

"Stop, Miss Florence," said nurse; "how can you think of pulling Anna's roses? You know very well she makes nosegays of them for those who employ her, and that many a nosegay she has brought to you. Come, let

us go in and see her poor sick mother, and do not think any more about it."

Florence obeyed, but most reluctantly; and instead of thinking no more about the roses, she thought of nothing else; and the more she thought of them, the more she wished to have them. So seeing the nurse was occupied with the poor sick woman, who was ill in bed, and that Mary was playing in a corner of the room with the kitten, and not observing her, she stole to the door, and had just stretched out her hand to seize the roses, when she heard a voice behind her say,

"So you are fond of flowers, my bonny young lady?"

Florence turned, and saw a gipsy-looking woman, in a red cloak, standing close beside her: her straw bonnet was drawn over her sun-burnt face, and she spoke with the Scotch accent, which particularly pleased Florence.

"I will give you far bonnier flowers than those," said the woman, "if you will come with me to the corner of the house. I have

a whole basket of roses there." She gave her hand to Florence as she spoke, and led her on a few yards; then hastily snatching her up in her arms, she pulled her red cloak over her, and crossing a stile which was close by, ran with her across the field. In vain poor Florence struggled and screamed.

"Oh, do not take me away! Do not take me away!" she cried. "Oh, nurse, nurse! where are you?"

But, alas! nurse heard her not. And where was Frisk—where was her faithful little dog at this moment that he too heard not the voice of his little mistress? Frisk had been persuaded, most reluctantly, to follow Mr. Percy to Worcester that morning, that he might surprise his mistress with a new collar on his return.

The gipsy continued to run on for some time, and Florence to scream.

"Hush," said the woman: "hold your tongue this moment, or I will find a way to make you do it. There is nobody going to murder you. You will be well enough cared for where you are going." As she spoke, she entered an old shed for cattle, which

seemed now to be in a ruinous condition. In one corner lay a boy, half asleep, on a bundle of straw, and a donkey stood beside him. He rubbed his eyes as they entered, and started up.

"Oh, mother," he said, "you have been long—long! I thought you would never come back."

"Yes," said the gipsy, "I hae been longer than I thought; but I hae brought wi' me what was weel worth the waiting for." And, as she spoke, she placed the poor weeping child upon the ground.

"You know," she continued, still addressing the boy, "I promised dame Burton to give her Zillah; but Zillah now I canna get: but I hae gotten what will answer my purpose just as weel. So you will remember, Ralph, if any body asks you any questions, this is Zillah, and I am her auntie, ye ken. Do ye hear me, lad?"

Ralph heard full well, but he made no answer: and he looked at Florence with strong feelings of compassion. Meanwhile the gipsy hastily proceeded to undress the little girl, all unmindful of her tears, and to put

upon her coarse clothes, such as she herself wore; and having tied a tattered straw bonnet on her head, and a little blue cloak round her shoulders, she carried her to the corner of the shed where Ralph had been lying, and having covered her with the straw, she bid her go to sleep and have done wi' her crying.

"Listen, listen, mother!" said Ralph. "Do ye hear that sound? What can it be?"

"Oh, it is the gong—it is the dinner-gong!" exclaimed Florence, starting up. "Oh, do take me home! pray, pray, take me!"

"Lie still, this moment!" said the gipsy. And turning to her son, she added, "I thought there soon would be a hue-and-cry after their bonny young lady, sowe are safer where we are for an hour or so: by that time the servants will be out after her through the village, and we can get clear over the hill, or e'er they are back again."

Meanwhile poor Florence had sobbed herself to sleep; and she was only roused from her slumbers, some time after, by feeling herself seated on the back of a donkey, and some one's arms around her waist. It

was Ralph who held her; and as they proceeded into the open air, he whispered in her ear,

"Oh, do not cry any more, my pretty lady! Mother will not hurt you: Ralph will not let her."

Poor Florence felt comforted by those kind words; and she tried to look up from the plaid which was wrapped round her. She saw that they were going up the hill, but by a path which she had never gone before; and she observed also that the gipsy, who was leading the donkey, had changed her red cloak for a blue one.

"Keep the plaid well over her, Ralph," said the gipsy, "and dinna be letting her look about her: and should we meet any company, which there is little chance o' in this path, leave me to answer them: say you no one word; and for the life o' ye let her not speak! stuff the handkerchief I hae given ye into her mouth if she tries it."

Ralph made no answer: he only patted Florence kindly with his rough hands; and the party proceeded for some time in silence. Florence was again almost asleep, when she

was roused by hearing approaching footsteps, and more than one youthful voice met her ear, exclaiming:

"Oh, nurse, do let us make haste home; for the sun is going down, and papa and mamma will have done tea, and they will think we are lost."

The little party seemed to cross their path at a short distance: their voices for some time were still heard at intervals upon the breeze; then died away, and all was silent around: but the words rang in Florence's ear, and banished sleep.

They continued for some time to ascend the hill; but the donkey, having been urged on beyond his usual pace, first began to lag considerably, and then refused to move at all.

"You vile, obstinate beast, you!" said the gipsy; "this is always the trick you play us when we have a job in hand. Ralph, we maun give him his ain way; we maun mak a halt for a brief space. But look, Ralph," she continued; "you hae better een than me; what's that I see? Is nae it an old man that's making towards us? Keep the plaid

weel down over her; for it's no for naething that old man's ta'en the hill sae late at night. But leave me to deal with him: and for the life that's in ye, say ae word."

Footsteps approached: and poor Florence's heart beat almost to bursting. When she heard old Thomas's well-known voice she started, and would have screamed aloud had not Ralph held her forcibly down, and with his hand before her mouth prevented all utterance.

"Oh, for mercy sake," he whispered in her ear, "don't cry out, or we shall both be murdered! Oh, don't move, don't move, my pretty lady!"

"Gude evening to you, mistress," said Thomas. "Hae you seen any thing o' a gipsy-looking woman, wi' a red cloak, that passed through the village of Malvern mair than an hour ago? Oh, if you hae seen her, for the love o' heaven, tell me which way she is gone!"

"I am thinking," said the gipsy, "I hae seen the very woman ye are speering after. She had on a red cloak, and a straw bonnet on her head, just such a one as I hae on my-

sel': and I am thinking she had a bairn wi' her; at least it looked unco like a bairn she had wrapped up in her red cloak. If that's the woman you are seeking after, she has ta'en the road to Gloucester, it's mair than an hour since."

"To Gloucester!" said the old man, with a heavy sigh; "then I am ower lang here. Oh, may God take pity upon me, for I am heart-broken a' thegither!"

Florence had almost jumped from the donkey as she heard his retreating footsteps.

"Oh, sit still, sit still!" whispered Ralph, as he held her fast; "sit still, and don't cry out, or mother will murder us all together."

But this time the donkey was rested, and they again set out to pursue their way. The moon was now up, and many beautiful stars were twinkling in the sky.

"You may put down the plaid now, Ralph," said the gipsy, "and let little miss look about her if she likes; she will be all the better o the callar air; and it's no likely we will be meeting wi' any mair company for this night at least.

They were now descending the other side of the hill; and the little girl felt much revived by the night air, which blew softly on her face. She gazed at the full clear moon, sailing through the sky in quiet grandeur, and the beautiful stars which surrounded it; and her little mind felt calmed and elevated.

"I know a hymn about these stars," she exclaimed. "It begins:

'The spacious firmament on high,
With all the blue ethereal sky.'

"Do you know that hymn? And do you know that God made that beautiful moon, and the stars, and everything in the world? and that he made us too; and that he sees us always? He sees me just now; and he knows that I have been taken away; and that I cried very much, and did not wish to go. My mamma tells me always, that he loves good children, and watches over them: but he could not love me when I wished to steal poor Anna's roses. But I will pray to him, and ask him to forgive me; and then he will love me again, and take me back.

Does your mamma teach you to pray to God?"

Ralph could not answer. He drew his hand across his eyes, and sighed bitterly.

"Why are you sorry?" said Florence. "My mamma says we should think about God when we are sorry, and that would comfort us. Will you speak to me about him now? I should like it very much: it would keep me from being frightened."

"I cannot," said Ralph: "I do not know how."

"Do you know yourself about him? Has nobody told you about God, though you are such a big boy?"

"Yes," said Ralph; "a good man in the prison did."

"In the prison!" exclaimed Florence, shuddering. "And have you been so very bad? Did you ever kill anything? Were you put in for that?"

"No!" said Ralph, in a tone of indignation. "Bad as you may think me, I am not come to that: I ne'er took the life o' mortal being. Me kill any one! How can you think I would have the heart to do it?"

"I did it once," said Florence. "Yes!" she exclaimed, feeling Ralph start with surprise: "I was very sorry after, but I did do it—I killed a chicken once!"

Poor little Florence was shocked and surprised to hear Ralph's suppressed laughter; and as the departed shades of many a poor straggling bird passed before his imagination, he laughed still more; for in chicken stealing and chicken killing Ralph was no mean adept.

"And is that the only bad thing you have ever done in your life?" he asked.

"Oh, no!" said Florence. "I have done a great many bad things. I am very often naughty; for you know the wicked spirit often puts bad things into my heart."

"Well," said Ralph, "and if the like o' you is not good, what is to be expected of such as me? Surely we shall not be answerable for what we cannot help."

"But we can help it," said Florence. "My mamma says, that if we pray for the Holy Spirit it will be put into our hearts, and that it is stronger than the evil spirit, and will chase away the bad thoughts, and good

thoughts will come, and we shall do what is right, and God will love us."

The gipsy, who had been walking on a little way before, returned to their side while Florence was speaking.

"What is all this," she said, in an angry voice, "that you are putting into the laddie's head? Hold your tongue this moment. It is time that the like o' you were sound sleeping: that would be mair natural for sic a bairn than what you hae been saying. And Ralph," she continued, "I think an hour or twa's sleep wald nae be amiss for ony o' us: my legs are no sae young as they hae been; I am unco weary; so I hae been forward to the barn where we sleeped the other night; the door is no open, but I hae tried the window; it is no barred, so you can creep in there, and draw the bolt o' the other door, ye ken: and we will be off again in the morning, afore ony o' the folks are stirring."

They were at this moment entering a village, but no cheerful light was glancing from the cottage windows, no dogs barked, no children's merry voices were heard; no hu-

man being appeared to whom poor Florence could appeal for protection—all was hushed in repose; all slept in their own quiet beds, while this child of many an anxious care was wandering, in the dead of night far from her cherished home, and from those who, with ardent prayers and many a bitter tear, were at that very moment weeping her unknown fate.

Before the door of a low stone building the party halted; and while Ralph dismounted and approached the window, the gipsy held Florence in her arms,—held her more dead than alive; for when she found herself again in the grasp of this rude woman, a loud hysteric scream was succeeded by a stillness so frightful, that the gipsy feared she had fainted entirely.

"Open the door quick!" she exclaimed, in a harsh, agitated voice. "Open it, Ralph: and there, tak her back to you," she continued, as she almost threw Florence into his arms; "tak her back to you, for you seem to hae found out the way to manage her, poor frightened thing as she is; mair trouble than all she is worth."

Ralph took Florence in his arms, and carrying her towards a corner of the barn, and gently laying her down on some straw, he took her little cold hands in his, and began to rub them; and whispering some soothing words in her ear, he bid her shut her eyes and go to sleep—the convulsive sobs of the little girl ceased.

"Yes," she said, "if you will stay beside me I will go to sleep, for I am very, very tired. But may I get up first and say my prayers?"

"No, no," said Ralph, in a low, hurried voice, "you must not do that, or mother will hear you; but say them low to yourself, and if you could say a bit prayer for me too, I should like it well."

"Yes," said Florence, "I will. I will say to God, that I thank him very much for sending you to be kind to me; and that I hope he will love you and make you good, that you may never be put into the prison again." Florence, in a low voice, began her simple prayer, and was the next moment fast asleep.

"What are you about there?" said the gipsy, in a rough voice, turning to Ralph,

who seemed to be taking off his jacket. "What are you going to do wi' that?"

"I am going to cover little miss with it," said Ralph. "Poor thing! she is little used to such a bed."

"Little miss, indeed!" muttered the gipsy. "Have nae I telt ye, once for all, that she is to be called Zillah. The lad's clean beside himsel' about that bairn. But here," she continued, throwing a bundle towards him, "tak my red cloak out o' that, and it may serve to cover baith o' you."

Ralph spread the cloak over the little girl, and lay down beside her; and, in a few minutes, the whole party slept profoundly.

Chapter Fourteenth.

THE sun was high in heaven, and many miles had been passed over before Florence awoke again. And on awaking, her first emotion was surprise. Surprise, to find herself seated on the grass, her back leaning against a tree, and the sweet fresh breeze of the morning blowing on her face.

"Nurse," she exclaimed, "what are you? where am I?—Oh, Mary, speak to me!" Then fixing her agitated, frightened gaze on the gipsy, who sat at a little distance with Ralph, cooking something over a wood fire, which they had kindled on the ground, the past, with its full tide of sorrow, rushed upon her mind, and, uttering a faint scream, she started to her feet. Ralph was at her side in a moment.

"Sit down again, my pretty lamb," he said in a soothing voice. "You would not run away, would you, from Ralph, that likes you so well? And see to the nice breakfast I have been making for you;" and as he spoke, he placed a little pitcher of boiled bread and milk before her. "And look," he added, holding up his cap, "look to the pretty flowers I have gathered, and the green rushes to make a crown with them for you. Ralph seated himself beside her, and began his work, in which Florence, with the happy forgetfulness of childhood, and smiling through her tears, was soon deeply engrossed.

What royal crown was ever anticipated with so sweet, so pure a pleasure? After a short rest the party rose to proceed on their way. Some words seemed to have passed between Ralph and his mother, unheard by Florence; for as the gipsy was lifting her on the donkey, she heard her say, in answer to an affecting look from her son: "No, Ralph, I tell ye no; it canna be. I hae thought seriously o' it; but I hae promised Zillah to dame Burton, and Zillah

I canna get, and the money I maun hae; so dinna be standing there breaking your heart about it. And what the warse will the bairn be after all? she will be weel seen to. So let us be off, an' no anither word."

The party proceeded, nor halted again till near sunset; when, in a sequestered spot, they seated themselves on a grassy bank, near which ran a deep rapid stream, which wound through the valley; and again kindling a fire upon the ground, of dry branches and leaves, which Florence was desired to assist Ralph in gathering from the neighbouring wood, the gipsy busied herself in preparing the evening meal.

"Ralph," she said, "I think it will be as weel that we rest here an hour or twa: whene'er we are through the rocky pass, we maun keep to the main road, ye ken: and that minna do for the daytime. So we can tak the pass when the moon is up, and then we can easily mak dame Burton's in the morning, before any o' her neighbours are stirring. Do ye hear me, Ralph?"

"Yes, mother," said the boy, looking sor-

rowfully at Florence, and sighing deeply; "I hear you very well."

"The lad is clean demented," muttered the gipsy to herself; "but it is a bit sweet bairn after all; I canna deny that."

"Come with me," said Ralph to Florence, who had now finished eating, and sat looking with a perplexed air, alternately at the chicken-bones in her lap, and her own dirty little fingers. "Come with me, and I will wash your pretty hands in the river yonder."

Florence gladly rose to follow him, and was soon after fully occupied, seated by his side making nosegays of the wild flowers he had gathered from the banks of the stream. The gipsy, meanwhile, not liking their prolonged absence, and curious to know the subject of their talk, rose from her seat, and making a circuit, so as to get close to them from behind, crept under a bush, and listened with eager attention.

"But why," said Florence, "do you say that? Why should I not see you any more? If you took me back, you would stay with us, and I would see you every day. I should

like to see you every day, for I like you very much."

"No, no," said Ralph, in a sorrowful voice, "that cannot be. Your papa would not let me stay with you: I am not good enough for that."

"But my papa would teach you to be good. He teaches me to be good, and Mary too, and so does mamma. And she gives us Psalms to learn every morning, and she teaches us to sing hymns. She would teach you too."

"Teach me!" said Ralph, in an agitated tone. "Oh, no, no! that is not for the like o' me. I am a poor boy; a poor sinful boy."

Florence looked up in his face, and with her little hand she brushed away the tears which were gathering in his eye.

"Do not cry," she said, "for it makes me sorry; and God loves you very much, though you are poor. Do you not know, in the Psalm it says, 'Lo the poor crieth, and the Lord heareth him; yea, and saveth him out of all his troubles? And he will save you too. And when you come to stay with

us, we will teach you to say this, and a great many more Psalms."

"But my mother," said Ralph, "my poor mother; I cannot leave her."

Florence for a moment did not answer; then seeing the increased agitation in Ralph's countenance, she said, "but she should stay with us, too, if she would not take me away any more. I dare say my mamma could make her good: she would pray for the Holy Spirit to help her."

"But I fear," said Ralph, "we could not persuade her to go; she would be so afeared of being put in the prison."

"The prison!" said Florence; "but why would they put her in the prison?"

"They would put her in prison for stealing you, I am afeard."

"Oh, no!" said Florence; "for she did not steal me; she only said, 'Come with me, and I will give you roses.' But she did not give me any: she had no roses. It was very good of God, not to strike her dead for telling me that lie. You know, in the Bible, it says that Sapphira was struck dead for telling a dreadful lie, and so was her husband. My

mamma always says, 'Florence, tell me the truth, and then I will not be angry—only a little angry. But if you tell me what is not true, then I shall be very, very angry; and what is worse, the great God will be angry with you, and will not love you.' I wonder what your mother will say, when she sees the lie she told in God's book! You know God writes every bad thing we do in his book that we may be judged." Ralph shuddered. Florence continued: "Oh, look at that beautiful sky!" The sun had set, and the whole horizon towards the west was a sea of liquid fire. "Look," she continued, "how very beautiful! Mamma calls that sunset; and perhaps Mary may be singing her evening hymn: sometimes, after sunset, mamma makes us sing it."

"Will you sing it to me?" asked Ralph.

"I will try," said Florence, and in a soft sweet voice she sang,

"Soon shall the evening star, with silver ray,
Shed its mild lustre on this sacred day;
Resume we then, ere sleep and silence reign,
The rites which holiness and heaven ordain."

But suddenly stopping, she burst into tears.

"Oh, I cannot sing any more," she said, "for it makes me sorry: it makes me think of my papa and mamma, and my little white bed, and Mary."

Florence's tears did not fall alone; the gipsy was powerfully agitated. Hastily brushing her hand across her eyes, she rose and glided from her concealment.

Ralph caught a glimpse of her as she was disappearing.

"It is my mother," he said, in an alarmed voice: "she has been listening to us."

"Will she be angry?" asked Florence, starting up.

The gipsy at that moment called, "Ralph! Ralph!" but in a softened tone.

"No," said Ralph, "do not be afraid, she is not angry: I know her voice so well." He took Florence by the hand, and they advanced towards her.

"Ralph," she said, "we needna start till the moon is weel up: so there, tak my red cloak and wrap it weel round little miss, and lay her down at the foot o' that tree; she will be the better o' her sleep, puir wee thing."

"Little miss!" murmured Ralph. "Poor

wee thing!" and he fixed his eyes anxiously on his mother's face. She turned hastily from him; and taking Florence's hand, he led her towards the tree, and seating himself beside her, he wrapped her carefully up in his mother's cloak, and laid her on the grass. For some time she kept peeping out, smiling in his face, and assuring him she was not sleepy; but soon her little eyes became heavy, then closing them entirely, she slept the sleep of innocence; and Ralph, after gazing at her some time with affectionate interest, sank down by her side.

Chapter Fifteenth.

When Florence awoke, she felt she was again seated on the donkey; the moonbeams playing on her face, and the noise of waters in her ears.

"What is that?" she said. "What noise is that I hear?"

"It is the river below us," said Ralph: "it is swelled with the rain we had two nights ago: I never heard it make such a noise before. Mother," he continued, "I wish the wooden bridge may be standing."

"If it is no standing," answered the gipsy, "we hae a longer journey before us than I am reckoning on: but there hasna been rain enough to harm the bridge. But what an uncommon night it is for heat: I can scarcely drag my legs after me—I never felt the path

sae steep before. We are far from the wooden bridge yet; but when once we are weel owre it, we can lie down under the rock, and rest for a wee while: we hae time enough before us yet."

The party proceeded for some time in silence; the path every moment becoming more rugged and difficult of ascent, and the gipsy apparently getting more fatigued.

"I dinna like the wind falling down sae sudden," she said; "there is no leaf stirring: there is something in the air I canna account for. Ralph, do you see naething o' the bridge? We surely should be near it now."

"Yes, mother; we are just coming to the turn: we shall see it then, if it be there to see, and if the dark heavy clouds clear away. Look, mother, look!" he continued, as the moon again shone out for a moment, and the slender bridge, (hanging as if in mid-air,) the deep swollen river, and the opposite rocks, became distinctly visible.

But the night every moment became more close and oppressive; heavy drops of rain began to fall, the moaning sound of the

waters increased, and all portended a coming storm.

"The bridge!" said the gipsy hurriedly, "let us mak' for the bridge! That passed, we are safe enough. It's coming on to be an awfu' night."

She urged them forward. At the first sound of the wooden bridge below the donkey's feet, the animal drew back, apparently conscious of the danger that awaited them. With supernatural strength she dragged it on. The middle of the bridge was passed: suddenly it creeked—vibrated. A vivid flash of lightning showed, for a moment, the deep flowing river below; loud thunder succeeded—the donkey made a desperate spring—the opposite bank was gained. There was a moment's pause—then a crashing sound—a loud plunge—the bridge was engulphed in the dark waters.

Ralph, scarcely conscious of what he did, sprang from the donkey, and flew, with Florence in his arms, to the shelter of the neighbouring rock. The gipsy sank down beside them in speechless terror. The rain now poured down in torrents; loud peals of thun-

der, echoed back by the rocks and hills, resounded through the air in one incessant roar; flashing lightning and impenetrable darkness followed each other in rapid succession. One moment there was the deepest gloom, in which no earthly object was discernible; the next, all was one fervent blaze of lurid light, in which the trees, the hills, the rocks, were clearly defined against the vivid sky.

The gipsy hid her face in her hands, and trembled violently in every joint.

"Oh, Ralph," she said, "this is a judgment on my guilty head! Where shall I hide myself? where can I flee for safety? Oh, speak to me, Ralph! Tell me, what can I do in sic an awfu' hour?"

"Pray to God," said Florence, in a low voice. "He will take care of you."

"Pray to God!" said the gipsy. "Oh, I dare not—I cannot!"

"I will pray for you," said Florence· "shall I?"

"Oh, my puir bairn!" continued the gipsy; "do you not know that I hae been your worst enemy?"

"Jesus Christ prayed for his enemies," said the little girl.

The wretched woman shuddered violently.

"Oh bairn, bairn!" she exclaimed; "dinna name his name! Never has it passed my lips, since that morning o' sin and sorrow, when I left my puir old mother, to become a wanderer on the face o' the earth."

"And did you leave your mother?" said Florence. "I would not have done that. I did not leave my dear mamma: but you took me away. God will not love you for that. But if you will be sorry, and pray to him, and take me back, then he will forgive you, for Jesus Christ's sake."

"Alas!" said the gipsy, "for me there can be no forgiveness: I hae been the worst of sinners!"

"If my mamma were here," said Florence, "she would tell you better about that. She would tell you that Jesus Christ came into the world to save every one; and that the worst of sinners have only to believe in him, and to love him, and to pray to him; and that he sends his own Spirit into their hearts, to make

them good. And when they die, they go to where he is, and are happy: for he died a cruel death, that they might live for ever in heaven."

The gipsy made no answer, but Florence felt her tears drop upon the hand she held; and Ralph sobbed audibly.

The storm had now passed away; the thunder had, for some time, entirely ceased; and, in a few minutes longer, little Florence lay in her cleft of the rock, with the heavens for her canopy, in a sweet and refreshing sleep.

The bright beams of the morning sun awoke her at an early hour; and looking up, she saw the gipsy standing over her. The harsh expression of her countenance seemed to have passed away. She looked at the little girl with a melancholy smile, and her eyes were swelled with weeping. But the change was unmarked by Florence; and, as she seemed about to lift her in her arms, all her former terror returning, she shuddered violently, and, shutting her eyes, exclaimed:

"Oh! where—where are you going to take me?"

"My puir bairn," said the gipsy, "from me you hae nothing more to fear. Where am

I going to take you? To your own dear home —to your papa and mamma! Yes, to your own papa and mamma, whatever may become o' me."

"To my papa and mamma!" exclaimed Florence. And springing into her arms, she clung round her neck, and burst into a flood of tears.

Ralph, who was already seated on the donkey, held out his arms joyfully to receive the happy child. And all being quickly arranged, the little party set forward to retrace their footsteps, though on the opposite side of the glen from that by which they had ascended.

But leaving the gipsy to her salutary sorrow, and Florence to tears of joy, let us return to those whom we have too long neglected, and who also had their share of woe—of such woe as only the hearts of parents can estimate.

Chapter Sixteenth.

We left nurse at the old woman's bed-side, all unconscious of the sorrow which awaited her. On missing Florence from the room, she took Mary by the hand and left the cottage: expecting, first, to find her playing at the door, and supposing, afterwards, that every moment she should overtake her on the road. She became, however, seriously uneasy when, on approaching the house, and looking through the drawing-room windows, which were down to the ground, she saw Mr. and Mrs. Percy alone in the room; but her feelings became uncontrollable when the nursery was found empty, and the servants all declared that none of them had seen Miss Florence. How she got to the drawing-room, and how she told her story, she could

never tell. It was a moment of which she ever afterwards had but an indistinct remembrance.

At first Mr. and Mrs. Percy were not nearly so much alarmed: they thought Florence had probably hidden herself for some childish frolic; but when the servants had searched in vain in every direction, and some one brought word that a gipsy woman, of very suspicious appearance, had been seen in the village a short time before, and of whom now no traces could be found, their fears rose to agony.

Of that long and dreary night, and of the succeeding day of tears and sorrow, I cannot speak. Poor little Mary was not the least afflicted of this now melancholy party: she followed her mamma up and down, like a shadow, clasping her hand fervently, as if she were afraid, every moment, that some one would steal her also away: yet when the hour of bed-time arrived, the sweet child had the resolution to say, "Do not come up into the nursery, mamma, when I am in bed: oh, do not come, it will make you so sorry!"

"No, my own dear Mary," said Mrs. Percy, "I will not give way to this weakness longer: I should be unworthy of the blessings that are yet left to me, if I were another night to neglect my duties towards you. Go, my sweet child, and I will follow."

Mr. Percy looked anxiously at his wife as Mary left the room.

"Yes," she said, with a smile of heavenly resignation, "I do feel equal to it. I have prayed earnestly to God for resignation to his divine will, and he has heard my prayer. He that 'took little children to his arms and blessed them,' will watch over our darling, and restore her again in his own good time. Yes, my beloved Charles," she continued, as she stooped forward and kissed his forehead, "I feel a sweet conviction that the child of so many prayers will not be long lost to us, even in this world."

Mrs. Percy had, indeed, need of that strength which she had so earnesly implored, to sustain her in the effort she was now making. The moment she entered the

nursery, Frisk's low melancholy whine met her ear: he lay in Florence's little bed, from which no power had been able that evening to remove him. She trembled violently, and was scarcely able to proceed, but lifting up her heart to God, "who is full of compassion and tender mercies, and plenteous in goodness and in truth," she passed on to Mary's bed, and knelt down beside her: when, after a few moments of silent prayer, she spoke to her of the strong hope she herself felt, that Florence would be restored to them, and left the little girl comparatively happy.

The next morning, and the next, passed in alternate hopes and fears. Frisk, too, had disappeared, no one knew where. Every effort to trace their lost darling had proved vain; all further search seemed useless. Mrs. Percy's prayers for resignation to the Divine will were fervent: but her increasing paleness, and the deep expression of her eye, marked the inward conflict.

It was towards the close of the fourth evening from the time of Florence's depar-

ture that she lay stretched on the sofa, her eyes closed as if in sleep. Mr. Percy sat by her, vainly endeavouring to fix his mind on the book before him. Little Mary was on a low stool at her mother's feet, her eyes fixed on her face, her thoughts on her absent sister. Suddenly the colour deepened in Mrs. Percy's cheek: she started up, exclaiming, "It is Frisk's bark! I am sure, I am certain. Oh, Charles, fly! fly!" A slight bustle was heard in the hall—the sound of little feet running along the passage;—the door opend—Frisk bounded into the room, followed by Florence. Mrs. Percy looked up, gave a faint scream, and fell senseless on the sofa.

The news of Florence's return spread through the house in a moment. Nurse flew from the nursery, Mrs. Norris from the housekeeper's room; men and maids came from every corner: no one knew how old Thomas got into the room, but there he stood, wiping his eyes in a corner.

Mrs. Percy's insensibility was but momentary. She opened her eyes. Mary and Flo-

rence were kneeling by her side, and she was supported in her husband's arms.

"Am I in heaven," she said, "or is this a dream? Oh speak to me! Is it my child? Is it Florence?"

"Yes, mamma, it is Florence. It is your own little girl. Oh kiss me! love me again, dear, dear mamma."

But why should I attempt to paint the scene which followed: the deep, fervent gratitude of the parents; the gay, smiling joy of the happy child?

The news of her return ran like wild-fire through the village. The bells were set a-ringing: there was feasting and rejoicing in every house. Many were the merry songs, from old and young, that went round that night, and many a bonfire blazed on Malvern hill. Florence's little bed, next morning, was strewed with roses, for Anna Rowley stood there with her tears and her flowers.

And now, my dear young readers, if you are sorry to say good-bye to Florence, so am I; for I have never yet parted with her

without regret, and Florence is a name that must be ever dear to my heart.*

* If any one wishes to know more of the gipsy, let them, in their next visit to Malvern, stop at the gate of the Priory, there they will see a blooming garden, the pride of Ralph's heart, and a cottage, where they will not fail to hear the praises of Florence extolled by a grateful, and now a truly pious mind.

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